Keys to the Community

A multiple case study into professional legitimation in community development practice

Sleutels tot de Gemeenschap

Een meervoudige gevalsstudie naar professionele legitimatie in de opbouwwerkpraktijk

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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English Summary

This study examined professional legitimation in the daily practices of community workers in Bos en Lommer in the Netherlands, Chelsea in the United States of America, and Doornkop in South Africa. Professional legitimation is here considered as the effort of community workers to obtain support, continuity and credibility for their professional involvement with the local community. The research, set up as a multiple case study, was developed against the background of a lively scholarly debate in the field about the legitimacy of community development. One of the central themes in these debates is the impact of the current socio-economic dominance of neoliberalism and political modernization in the form of new public management. These macro-social developments are generally evaluated as crippling community development’s social transformative mission. According to several scholars, the general tendency in modern social policy to reduce social problems to individual resilience is especially contradictory to this mission. The current strategies to tackle wider social problems are addressing the resources of already strained local communities. According to the leading scholars in the field, these sociopolitical strategies limit the possibilities for community workers to engage local communities in projects aimed at strengthening local democracy and community empowerment.

These scholarly discussions shed light on the institutional legitimacy of community development as a practice, which is subject to the negative consequences of the current sociopolitical climate. Furthermore, professional community development practice is phrased as predominantly dependent on these structural and institutional forces. However, one pending question is how in the midst of these sociopolitical impediments professionals in the field are able to create legitimacy. In order to address this question, this study adopted a focus on the community workers as they actively try to develop a mandate for their work in, and with, local communities. Therefore, the everyday experiences of community workers is pursued and examined closely as an addition to the focus on the institutional dimension of community development’s legitimacy.

The experiences of community workers when obtaining a professional mandate have been studied under one central assumption. This study in particular assumes that the ability of community workers to create a common framework for the professional-community relations is crucial for obtaining professional legitimation in daily practice. The legitimating possibility of this common framework is derived from the influential theories on legitimation of Berger and Luckmann (1991). They considered legitimation as a situation of acceptance of shared affective, normative and cognitive evaluations about reality. According to later legitimacy theorists, such as Suchmann (1995), this acceptance requires that social actors actively engage in legitimacy management, themed as an arsenal of legitimating techniques.

This study extended this assumption to the examination of legitimation in three ways. First, it treats legitimation as a contextual phenomenon in terms of an outcome that is a situation of acceptance of one social actor’s actions by another; and secondly, it treats legitimation as a process of applying an arsenal of techniques to obtain legitimacy. Each approach to the study of legitimation follows a distinct logic of explanation. Situations of legitimation are explained by linking community workers’ experiences of attempting to secure legitimacy to specific characteristics of the context of practice. This is the logic of variance. It assumes that these experiences of legitimacy by community workers are intrinsically related to the constraints in their respective contexts of practice. In order to follow this approach, the three cases have been selected on the basis of variety along a number of dimensions. These aspects entailed very different local traditions of civil society and governance, so-
cial policy constraints, local development issues, and local professionalization practices. Variations in the contexts of practice might generate specific building blocks for the community workers’ mandates.

The second approach to the study of professional legitimation depicted the operational dimension. It examined legitimation as an active endeavor of community workers to create legitimacy for their presence and engagement with the community. The logic of explanation here is processual. It considers legitimation as a process that evolves over time, fueled by responses of the community workers to challenges of their legitimacy. Here the explanation rests on the time-based reflections of community workers. These challenges are related to situations of establishment, sustenance, defense or restoration of their legitimacy as a professional. What will be explained in this processual approach are the strategies that community workers apply to these challenges by appealing to the pragmatic, moral and cognitive interests of the local community.

A third angle in this study was the establishment of possible generic features. This approach is comparative. It assumes that, despite their work in highly varied professional contexts, community workers share common concerns, and possibly also common approaches to managing their professional mandate in relation to the community. This comparative approach focused on both the variance logic and the process logic. The explanatory logic of the Capabilities Approach was adopted in order to be able to compare the constituents of legitimacy and the legitimacy strategies. At its core, the Capabilities Approach (Sen, 1989), anchors the ability of people to be able to function in terms of what they see as valuable. Sen claims that achieving specific goals in life is not the only essential objective in order for people to flourish. On the contrary, the freedom to define what one has reason to pursue is decisive. Here deliberation on what one values is placed as a process in relation to the environment in which one lives. This study considers the process of legitimation similarly, namely as deliberate efforts of community workers to negotiate their ability to function effectively and professionally in the local context. Like the CA, the ability to use the context as a resource to achieve professional legitimacy will be central. Consequently, the varieties in constituents of legitimacy are themed as legitimate functionings, and legitimation strategies are conceptualized as the application of professional capabilities to achieve professional legitimacy. The Capabilities Approach is generally acknowledged for its ability to function as an evaluation framework, since it can be applied to a variety of social, economic, psychological and professional issues.

The research methodology was set up accordingly. It adopted a multiple case study strategy with embedded units. In each of the three case studies, the researcher was immersed for three months in the daily practices of community workers. Here, he was also sensitive to specific incidents that occurred or had occurred recently. This enabled him to address these incidents for further reflection in the individual interviews and the focus group meetings. The cases were selected on the grounds of obtaining a maximum variety in specific contextual characteristics. The ontology to study professional legitimation was drawn from critical realism, which considers the examination of social phenomena in terms of context - mechanism- outcome configurations. Here, the causal relations between contextual variables and social phenomena are studied in terms of generative mechanisms. This enabled a structural approach to study legitimation. After all, it made it possible to study the contextual dimension of professional legitimation (experiences of legitimacy by the community workers) as an outcome mediated by the generative mechanism of the legitimacy management strategies of the community workers. The data-collecting phase consisted of a mixture of different sources, such as desk research and artifacts with an emphasis on observations, individual interviews and focus group meetings where the initial assumptions of the researcher could be verified, falsified or adjusted. The data analysis was supported by Max QDA software, and it included two cycles of
coding, with a continuous looping between the original sensitizing concepts and the contextualized categories.

The first case study was in Bos en Lommer, one of the boroughs in the western parts of Amsterdam. Here community workers who were appointed as Participation and Activation Employees, functioned as part of the recently developed Social Neighborhood Teams. As a consequence of recent transitions in Dutch social policy, their former relatively autonomous position was seriously challenged. This confronted them with the need to redefine their mandate at the local level. Some things remained the same, such as their role to support the neighborhood committees. Other aspects of practice changed, such as the increasing emphasis on addressing the resources of the community itself, as a condition to receive financial and professional support for local initiatives. Not surprisingly, the external recognition of their position as a professional appeared to be at the core of their sense of legitimacy. Their mandate was further supported by the emerging engagement of local people, which confirmed their professional efficacy. A third constituent of professional legitimacy was identified as their ability to control the volatility of the interactions between active citizens, the semi-formal forms of neighborhood organization, and the actions of local politicians and officials. In order to obtain a sense of legitimacy, a number of legitimation strategies were identified, such as tapping-in to the local culture, accommodation, regulating and modeling.

The second case study took place in Chelsea, an industrial city near Boston in the United States of America. Here grass-roots organizers engaged with the often-precarious legal, financial, political and housing situation of a predominantly low-income Latino population. The organizers based their professional legitimacy on their ability to find audiences for what they saw as urgent community issues. A second constitutive aspect of their professional mandate was identified as their ability to provoke the transition of local urgencies into an activist, as well as a personal development, agenda targeted by the local people. In order to secure their professional engagement with the community over time, the organizers in Chelsea sought to embed community engagement in more structural local and regional resources, such as coalitions and financial initiatives. A fourth asset for their mandate was identified as commonality, either through a shared ethnic or local background, or in terms of a universal narrative of human rights and global justice. The legitimation strategies of the Chelsea organizers, attempting to obtain legitimacy through these terms identified, were labeled as nurturing, yielding, arranging, and integrating.

The third case study took place in Doornkop, part of Johannesburg, close to Soweto. Here, area leaders worked as staff of the local Child Aid Doornkop on a comprehensive community development strategy, with a special focus on economic empowerment of the Black African population. These area leaders functioned as primus inter pares, based on their local roots and the professional education provided by their organization. Their professional mandate to work in the dire living circumstances of the residents, rested, first, on their ability to acquire the willingness of the residents to engage in local development projects. Furthermore, these area leaders acknowledged the importance of the local residents’ appropriation of this development process by increasing their own involvement. Creating coherence in the activities of the local people was crucial, in order to provide continuity for their professional engagement. Credibility for their professional position was associated with developing professional authority. Corresponding legitimation strategies were identified as messaging, appreciation, directing, and exemplifying.

Based on the contextual characteristics of the constituents of professional legitimacy and the corresponding legitimation strategies, a comparative perspective was adopted in order to detect possibly generic features. At the basis of this comparison was the Capabilities Approach. Its basic concepts of conversion factors, deliberative capabilities and functionings, were used to depict analo-
gies in the respective contextual and operational dimensions of professionalization. These analogies were formulated as generic dimensions. Furthermore, despite the local characteristics behind processes of legitimation, generic features were revealed with regard to the dynamics that community workers had to respond to in all contexts studied. These analogies in for instance access, community responsibility, structural embedding and professional appeal as crucial for a community workers’ mandate, point to the possibility of generic themes in the operational dimension of professional legitimation in community development. Similarly, a number of analogies in the legitimating capabilities could be detected, such as fusing, a skillful merging of professional stakes with the interests of the local community. Also other legitimating capabilities, such as diligent response, settling and staging are tentatively formulated as generic features in professional legitimation strategies in community work.

This study also was confronted with limitations. Legitimacy appeared not to be a subject that was initially easy to discuss with the community workers. The limited time the researcher had to be present in the different contexts also imposed restrictions to follow up on the responses of the community workers to challenges of legitimacy over time. Moreover, the variety of professional backgrounds and relations with other stakeholders in the community development processes threatened the transferability required to enable and justify a rigorous comparative approach. However, by adopting a focus on these workers’ everyday challenges in practice, and their time-based recollections, a firm database could be built. The comparative strategy to obtain generic features was secured by a principal focus on the professional-community relationships.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study proved to be comprehensive enough to draw some conclusions. It reveals the subtle, complex, vulnerable and conditional, but above all the reciprocal nature of professional-community relationships. In different stages of professional engagement with the community, community workers need to redefine their mandate. They have to handle a fragile balance between an inconspicuous and at the same time deliberate access to local people. As community members adopt responsibility for local issues, it might not always evolve along the lines community workers expect and appreciate. A persistent professional relationship over time requires sensitivity for how and where to anchor community engagement in existing but also new structural local networks and facilities. But the local context does not always provide these crucial resources. Professional appeal determines if and how community members evaluate the credibility of the community workers’ actions. But what this study also demonstrates is that there are some common aspects in the type of legitimating capabilities that are required to obtain professional legitimacy. Fusing professional and community interests, a diligent response to support emerging local initiatives, but also being able to settle local ambitions are, however tacitly, certainly intrinsically part of the professional skills. Lastly, with staging community workers demonstrate the ability to use personal characteristics and normative assumptions about ideal community behaviour as constitutive for the professional relevance of their engagement with the community.

Finally, this study also formulated some further directions for research on professional legitimation in community development. For instance, this could entail a more structured and longitudinal approach in order to expand this study into other community development practices. Recommendations also are formulated with regard to the role of the Capabilities Approach as a general framework to study professional practices. Due to its conceptual generality, the Capabilities Approach could be suitable to structure studies that seek to focus on the interplay between contextual features and the concerns of professionals attempting to create the necessary conditions for practice.
Nederlandse samenvatting

Deze studie onderzocht professionele legitimatie in de dagelijkse praktijk van opbouwwerkers in Bos en Lommer (Nederland), Chelsea (Verenigde Staten van Amerika), en Doornkop (Zuid-Afrika). Professionele legitimatie wordt hier beschouwd als de actieve inspanning van opbouwwerkers om steun te verwerven voor hun activiteiten, continuïteit te creëren voor hun werk, en geloofwaardig te zijn als professional.

Dit onderzoek werd ontwikkeld tegen de achtergrond van een levendig wetenschappelijk debat in de internationale wetenschappelijke literatuur over de legitimiteit van het opbouwwerk. Een van de centrale thema’s in deze debatten is de impact van de dominantie van het neoliberalisme en de modernisering van het openbaar bestuur sinds halverwege de jaren 1990 in de vorm van new public management. Deze macro-maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen worden over het algemeen door de wetenschappers beoordeeld als desastreus voor de sociaal-transformatieve missie van het opbouwwerk. Vooral in tegenspraak met deze missie is, aldus de dominante teneur in het debat, de algemene tendens in het huidige sociaal beleid om sociale problemen te individualiseren. Tegelijk doet de overheid steeds vaker beroep op de vaak al overvraagde lokale gemeenschappen om zich voor elkaar in te spannen. Deze oproepen tot actief burgerschap, of participatie, beperken de mogelijkheden van de opbouwwerkers om lokale gemeenschappen te engageren tot meer emancipatorische en politieke deelname.

Deze wetenschappelijke discussies werpen licht op de institutionele legitimiteit van het opbouwwerk als een praktijk die lijdt onder de negatieve gevolgen van het huidige sociaal-politieke klimaat. Bovendien is de professionele ontwikkeling van het opbouwwerk geformuleerd als afhankelijk van deze structurele en institutionele krachten. Echter, een prangende vraag is hoe in te midden van deze sociaal-politieke belemmeringen professionals in het veld in staat zijn om legitimiteit te creëren. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, verlegt deze studie de focus van de sociaal-politieke analyse naar de ervaringen van de opbouwwerkers zelf. De aannamer is hier dat zij actief proberen om een mandaat voor hun werk te ontwikkelen in relatie met de lokale gemeenschap. Als aanvulling op de focus op de institutionele dimensie van legitimiteit, brengt deze studie een focus op de alledaagse ervaringen van opbouwwerkers met het verkrijgen en in stand houden van een professioneel mandaat.


In dit onderzoek wordt deze veronderstelling over legitimering uitgebreid door legitimatie te bezien op drie manieren. Allereerst behandelt deze studie legitimatie een contextueel fenomeen, in termen van een resulatant. Legitimiteit is een resultaat van acceptatie van een sociale acteur door een ander. Ten tweede behandelt het onderzoek legitimatie als een proces. Dit houdt een focus in op de manier waarop sociale actoren in de tijd technieken gebruiken om legitimiteit te verkrijgen. Elke benadering van deze studie vereist een duidelijk verklaringskader. Situities van legitimiteit zijn te verklaren door de legitimiteitservaringen van opbouwwerkers te bestuderen op hun referenties naar de
specifieke kenmerken van de context van hun praktijk. Dit is de logica van variantie. Het gaat ervan uit dat deze ervaringen van legitimiteit van opbouwwerkers intrinsiek verband houden met de beperkingen en mogelijkheden in de context waarin hun praktijk zich afspeelt. Voor deze benadering zijn de drie case studies geselecteerd op basis van hun onderlinge verscheidenheid. Deze aspecten betreffen variatie in lokale tradities van civil society en lokaal bestuur, sociaal beleid, plaatselijke ontwikkelingsvraagstukken en de professionele kenmerken van de opbouwwerkers. Variaties in de context van de praktijk kunnen specifieke bouwstenen zijn voor het professionele mandaat van de opbouwwerkers.

De tweede benadering in deze studie naar professionele legitimatie focust op de operationele dimensie. Hier werd legitimatie onderzocht als een actieve inspanning van de opbouwwerkers om legitimiteit te creëren voor hun aanwezigheid en betrokkenheid bij de gemeenschap. Het verklaringskader is hier processueel. Het beschouwt legitimatie als proces dat zich ontwikkelt in de tijd, gevormd door hoe opbouwwerkers inspelen op reacties uit de lokale gemeenschap. Hier rust de verklaring op de reflecties van opbouwwerkers over hun legitimatiemethoden. Deze technieken worden ingezet om met legitimiteituitdagingen om te kunnen gaan. Uitdagingen van legitimiteit hebben betrekking op situaties als vestiging, ondersteuning, verdediging of herstel van hun professionele legitimiteit. Wat in deze procesgerichte benadering centraal staat, zijn de strategieën van opbouwwerkers om te reageren op legitimiteituitdagingen door middel van een beroep op de pragmatische, morele en cognitieve belangen van de lokale gemeenschap.

Een derde invalshoek in deze studie betrof een focus op de mogelijke generieke thema’s in professionele legitimiteit in het opbouwwerk. Deze focus is vergelijkend. Het gaat ervan uit dat, ondanks hun werk in zeer verschillende professionele contexten, opbouwwerkers gedeelde thema’s hebben in wat hun legitimiteit inhoudt, en mogelijk aspecten van hun legitimiterende strategieën gemeen hebben. Voor deze vergelijkende strategie wordt gebruik gemaakt van de Capabilities Approach als conceptueel kader. De Capabilities Approach, oorspronkelijk ontwikkeld door de Indiase econoom Amartya Sen (1988), verankert het vermogen van mensen om te kunnen functioneren in termen van wat zij zien als waardevol tot de kern van zijn ontwikkelingstheorie. Niet het bereiken van specifieke doelen in het leven is essentieel voor mensen om te kunnen groeien, beweert hij. Integendeel, de vrijheid om te definiëren wat waardevol is, is doorslaggevend. Hier wordt de discussie over wat waardevol is gezien als verbonden met de omgeving waarin men leeft en werkt. Deze studie naar opbouwwerkers beschouwt het proces van legitimatie op dezelfde wijze, namelijk als beredeneerde inspanningen van opbouwwerkers om in hun context volgens hun professionele waarden functioneren. Net zoals in de CA, gaat het dan om de mogelijkheid in de context middelen te vinden om professionele legitimiteit te bereiken. Bijgevolg zullen de contextuele bronnen als bestanddelen van legitimiteit centraal staan. De Capabilities Approach wordt algemeen erkend voor zijn vermogen om het menselijk functioneren te beschouwen als centraal afwegingskader. De toepassing ervan is wijdverbreid in onderzoek binnen de sociale wetenschappen, de economische, de psychologie en professionele praktijken.

De gevolgde onderzoeksmethode is op deze ambities geënt. Het betreft een meervoudige case study, met 'embedded units'. De onderzoeker was in elk van de drie case studies gedurende drie maanden onderdeel van de dagelijkse praktijk van opbouwwerkers. Hier lette hij op specifieke legitimiteitsincidenten die onlangs hadden plaatsgevonden. Zo kon hij incidenten meenemen voor verdere reflectie tijdens individuele gesprekken en in de focusgroepbijeenkomsten. De case studies werden geselecteerd op grond van het verkrijgen van een maximale variatie in contextuele kenmerken. De ontologie voor de studie van professionele legitimatie is ontledend aan het kritisch realisme. Het kritisch realisme beschouwt het onderzoek van maatschappelijke fenomenen in termen van context - mechanisme- uitkomst configuraties. Hier worden verbanden tussen de contextuele variabelen
en maatschappelijke fenomenen geduid in termen van *generatieve mechanismen*. Dit grondde een structurele aanpak om legitimatie te bestuderen. Immers, het maakt het mogelijk om de contextuele dimensie van professionele legitimatie te bestuderen (ervaringen van legitimiteit door de opbouwwerkers) als resultaat, zij het gemedieerd door het generatieve mechanisme van *legitimiteitsmanagement* door de opbouwwerkers. De dataverzameling bestond uit een mix van verschillende bronnen, zoals desk research en artefacten, met de nadruk op observaties, individuele gesprekken en focusgroepbijeenkomsten. Tijdens de laatste, werden voorlopige veronderstellingen van de onderzoeker geverifieerd en waar nodig aangepast. De data-analyse werd ondersteund door Max QDA software, en omvatte twee cycli van codering, met een continue lus tussen de oorspronkelijke attenderende begrippen en gevonden gecontextualiseerde categorieën.

De eerste case studie was in Bos en Lommer, een van de buurten in het westen van Amsterdam. Hier werkten buurtwerkers, aangesteld als Participatie en Activering medewerkers. Zij fungeerden als lid van de kort daarvoor ontwikkelde Sociale Wijkteams. Als gevolg van de recente transities in het Nederlands sociaal beleid, kwam hun vroegere relatief autonome positie onder druk te staan. Dit confronteerde hen met de noodzaak om hun lokale mandaat te herdefinieren. Sommige professionele taken bleven hetzelfde, zoals hun rol in de ondersteuning van bewonerscomités te ondersteunen. Andere aspecten van hun werk veranderden, zoals de toenemende nadruk op de actieve inzet van bewoners als voorwaarde voor financiële en professionele ondersteuning. Niet verrassend, dat de veranderingen in hun professionele context zijn invloed hadden op hun gevoel van legitimiteit, zoals de behoefte aan de externe erkenning van hun positie als professional. Hun mandaat werd verder versterkt, als zijn een toenemende betrokkenheid van de lokale bevolking zagen. Het bevestigde hun professionele effectiviteit. Een derde bestanddeel van hun professionele legitimiteit werd geïdentificeerd als hun vermogen om de vluchtigheid van de interacties tussen actieve burgers, de semiformele vormen van de wijkorganisatie en lokale politici en ambtenaren te kunnen controle ren. Als legitimatiestrategieën werden geïdentificeerd *tapping-in, accommodating, regulating, and modelling*.

De tweede case study vond plaats in Chelsea, een industriële stad in de buurt van Boston, in de Verenigde Staten van Amerika. Hier werken grass-roots *organizers*. Zij houden zich bezig met de vaak precaire juridische, financiële, politieke en woonsituaties van een overwegend Latino bevolking. Deze *organizers* onttrekken hun professionele legitimiteit onder meer aan hun vermogen om het publiek te vinden voor wat zij zien als dringende sociale kwesties. Een tweede aspect van hun professionele mandaat werd geïdentificeerd als hun vermogen om de overgang naar een activistische en op persoonlijke ontwikkeling gerichte agenda te begeleiden. Om hun *professionele* betrokkenheid in de tijd veilig te stellen, zoeken organizers naar mogelijkheden om de *lokale* betrokkenheid in te bedden in meer structurele lokale en regionale coalities en financiële impulsen. Een vierde bouwsteen voor hun mandaat werd geïdentificeerd als gemeenschappelijkheid. Deze gemeenschappelijkheid moest tot uitdrukking komen, hetzij in een gedeelde etnische of lokale achtergrond, hetzij in termen van een universeel verhaal over mensenrechten en mondiale rechtvaardigheid. De legitimeringstrategieën van de *organizers* zijn hierop gericht, in dit onderzoek omschreven als *nurturing, yielding, arranging, and integrating*.

De derde case study vond plaats in Doornkop, gelegen in Johannesburg. Hier werken *area leaders* bij Child Aid Doornkop met een integrale opbouwwerkstrategie. Een speciale focus hierbij ligt op de economische emancipatie van de zwarte Afrikaanse bevolking. Deze *area leaders* functioneerden als *primus inter pares*, op basis van hun lokale wortels en de professionele vorming die ze kregen in hun organisatie. Hun professionele mandaat om te werken in de benarde leefomstandigheden van de bewoners rustte eerst en vooral van hun vermogen om de bereidheid van de bewoners te ver-
werven om deel te nemen in lokale ontwikkelingsprojecten. Bovendien was cruciaal voor het man-
daat van deze area leaders dat zij in staat waren de toe-eigening van het ontwikkelingsproces van de
lokale bevolking te stimuleren. Om de continuïteit van hun professionele inzet te garanderen, was
het scheppen van samenhang in de betrokkenheid van de lokale bevolking essentieel. Geloofwaar-
digheid van hun professionele positie werd geassocieerd met de ontwikkeling van professionele ge-
zag. Gelieerd aan deze bouwstenen van hun professioneel mandaat waren legitimieringsstrategieë
als messaging, appreciating, directing en exemplifying.

De contextuele bouwstenen voor legitimiteit en de legitimieringstrategieën uit de drie bestu-
derde contexten zijn vervolgens vergeleken op hun generieke kenmerken. Als methodologisch in-
strument fungeerde de Capabilities Approach. De basisbegrippen van de CA, zoals conversiefactoren,
deliberatieve capabilities en functionings, werden gebruikt om analogieën in professionele legiti-
mite kaart te brengen. Deze analogieën in de respectievelijke contextuele en operationele dimensie
van legitimiteit werden geformuleerd als generieke dimensies. Ondanks de invloed van lokale ken-
merken op processen van legitimatie, bleken er analogieën in de contextuele en operationele aspec-
ten van professionele legitimatie. Dit kwam onder andere naar voren in bijvoorbeeld de manier
waarop opbouwwerkers toegang zoeken tot de lokale gemeenschap en een gezamenlijk engagement
opbouwen. Daarnaast is kenmerkend hoe ze een structurele inbedding zoeken voor hun professione-
le betrokkenheid, en het belang van professionele ‘aantrekkingskracht’ voor hun mandaat. Ook wer-
den analogieën gevonden in de legitimieringstrategieën, zoals fusing, een bekwaam samen laten
smelten van professionele belangen met de belangen van de lokale gemeenschap. Tenslotte werden
ook andere legitimatie-capabilities zichtbaar, zoals diligent response, settling, en staging.

Deze studie kende ook een aantal beperkingen. Onder andere bleek legitimiteit een onderwerp
dat niet eenvoudig bespreekbaar was met de opbouwwerkers. Bovendien bleek de tijdspanne die de
onderzoeker had om aanwezig te zijn in hun context ook een druk te leggen op het bestuderen van de
reacties van opbouwwerkers op uitdagingen van hun professionele legitimiteit. Evenzeer proble-
matisch was de verscheidenheid aan professionele achtergronden, en het soort relaties dat op-
bouwwerkers onderhielden met andere lokale belanghebbenden dan alleen de gemeenschap zelf.
Dit beperkte in eerste instantie de onderlinge vergelijkbaarheid. Het onderzoek anticipeerde op deze
onvoorziene omstandigheden met allereerst het verleggen van de focus op legitimieringsvraagstuk-
en naar de dagelijkse uitdagingen van opbouwwerkers. Daarnaast bleek ook het benutten van hun
herinneringen aan legitimieteituitdagingen een stevige bron van gegevens op te leveren. De vergelij-
kende strategie werd mogelijk gemaakt door primair te focussen op de professionele relaties die de
opbouwwerkers onderhielden met de lokale gemeenschap.

Dit onderzoek biedt inzicht in de subtiele, complexe, kwetsbare en voorwaardelijke relatie die
opbouwwerkers onderhouden met lokale mensen. Daarnaast laat het ook zien hoe wederzijds die
professionele relatie moet zijn. Dat blijkt onder meer uit de inspanning die opbouwwerkers in de
studie zich getroosten om in verschillende stadia van betrokkenheid bij de gemeenschap, hun pro-
fessionele mandaat te herdefiniëren. Dit herdefiniëren begint al als ze op een onopvallende en tege-
lijkertijd doelbewuste manier toegang zoeken tot de lokale gemeenschap. Als leden van de gemeen-
schap hun verantwoordelijkheid opnemen voor lokale kwesties, gebeurt dat niet altijd op een manier
die opbouwwerkers verwachten en waarderen. Een langdurig professioneel engagement vergt sen-
sitiviteit voor nieuwe, structurele lokale netwerken en faciliteiten. Maar de lokale context biedt niet
altijd vanzelfsprekend zulke cruciale middelen. Professionele ‘zeggingskracht’ lijkt essentieel voor de
geloofwaardigheid van de opbouwwerkers. Deze studie toont hierbij aan dat in alle drie de contex-
ten, een aantal gemeenschappelijke ‘legitimieringsscapaciteiten’ nodig zijn om professionele legiti-
teit te verkrijgen. Hierbij is het cruciaal dat opbouwwerkers hun eigen professioneel belang weten te
verweven met pragmatische, morele en cognitieve belangen van de lokale gemeenschap. *Fusing*, bijvoorbeeld verwijst naar vaardig mengen van professionele en lokale belangen in de eerste contac-
ten. *Diligent response*, verwijst naar de zorgvuldige anticipatie op opkomende lokale initiatieven. *Settling* is het vermogen om lokale ambities structureel in te bedden. Door middel van *staging*, ten slotte, maakt de opbouwwerker persoonlijke kenmerken en normatieve noties over ideaal sociaal gedrag tot inzet van zijn professionele zeggingskracht.

Tot slot werd in dit onderzoek ook een aantal aanwijzingen geformuleerd voor toekomstig on-
derzoek naar de professionele legitimatie in het opbouwwerk. Hierbij zou bijvoorbeeld een meer gestructureerde, en longitudinale aanpak naar legitimieringsstrategieën zinvol zijn. Ook de uitbrei-
ding van deze studie naar andere opbouwwerkpraktijken zou de basis voor een algemene theorie over legitimering in het opbouwwerk kunnen versterken. Deze studie formuleerde ook aanbevelin-
gen met betrekking tot de rol van de Capabilities Approach voor de studie van professionele praktij-
ken. De conceptuele breedheid van de CA maakt het geschikt voor onderzoek dat is gericht op de wisselwerking tussen contextuele kenmerken en de focus van de professional op het scheppen van voorwaarden om zijn praktijk als zinvol te kunnen ervaren.
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Acknowledgements

In the solitude of the final writing stages of this book, one tends to forget how an adventure such as this study is indebted to others. In fact, the truth is that the roots of this project even go as deep as my first reading experiences. I was mesmerized by all the books in my mother’s library. I do not remember the title, obviously, but I do know it must have been one from her books on social issues, or on human development. She was also one of the first women in the 1960s who got a professional degree in Settlement Work, and consequently started as a Dutch settlement house worker. Her upbringing as one of the youngest daughters of a textile factory owner was crucial. She tended to ignore all warnings not to wander in the neighborhoods where her fathers’ factory workers lived.

Here, she developed what Richard Sennett in Respect (2004) sharply sketched as a combined social and religious engagement with the workers and their poorly housed families. She witnessed how on Friday nights, the men took their just received weekly wages to the local pub. In the meantime, their women reluctantly waited in their homes, hoping some of the money that was left would be enough to buy groceries for the week. She pleaded with her father to develop a local bank where the wages could be deposited. Drunken men do not make the best decisions for their families, was her argument. She felt discomfort about the social inequalities in the Netherlands of post WWII.

Later, I came to assess her engagement to be as enlightened as it was normative. Educated as she was, she simultaneously felt obliged to support the less privileged, but was also well aware of how her affluence made her distinct from the working class. For her, it is was obvious and beyond discussion that a person can better flourish by dedicating oneself to education than just being immersed in mundane pleasures. This was a burden that she found in the mentality of the working class. She made sure we, as children, would adopt her vision on this matter. This book is a result of not only my first encounters with her books, but also of her well-intended paternalism, and her emphasis on education.

After my graduation as a cultural psychologist in the mid-1990s, I accidentally became involved in community work at first sight. I was heading a small department in a local cultural centre that programmed social and cultural public debates. At that time, Dutch political and intellectual establishment discontent about the contribution of social professionals to the uplifting of the neighborhoods was at his height. It was a central issue in the many debates between local and national politicians, scholars, cultural organizations and social professionals that I hosted in those days. During preparatory talks with community workers, I observed a sort of defensiveness; and at the same time, I noticed a kind of righteousness in their talks. They felt attacked by public opinion, while they simultaneously felt entitled to voice what they saw or heard in the streets. This double sentiment kept on puzzling me, but at that time, I did not know exactly why.

When I started to work as a social policy consultant and lecturer in community development, this puzzle kept on occupying my thoughts. I realized that this sense of “challenged righteousness” I witnessed was not just a sign of the times. This combination of lack of public appreciation and deeply felt engagement with the poor and the uneducated, was what these community workers shared with their predecessors, who worked as what Dr. M. Spierts (2014). termed the “silent forces” of the post-WWII emerging social welfare states. It was the historical motive that Sennet (2004). sketched as the emblem of “the nun and the socialist” : and it was reiterated by Mae Shaw as “benevolent welfare paternalism” living on. The question was, “Who is willing to support the well-intended efforts of the community workers?”
Luckily, I have been able to knit this historical motive of Dutch community work in the this study. I hope that I’ve made clear how a number of not so coincidental experiences could be translated into a research project. The initial core of my “big question” consisted of a curiosity about the vulnerable sense of entitlement among community workers regarding their professional contributions to local livability issues. Here, other factors besides my childhood and early professional experiences came to the rescue. Crucial for the start of this research process is my cooperation and friendship with Dr. Marcel Spierts, a scholar and innovator in Dutch social cultural work. Our many discussions enriched my further understanding of the precarious position of social and cultural professionals, such as the community workers. Again, it was not a coincidence that our jointly written chapter on professionalization in the sociocultural professions started with the sentence “social cultural workers do not have it easy.” (Gradener & Spierts, 2006). His critical review of my conceptual framework and one of my first case study reports, pushed me into a highly necessary process of simplification and clarification of the key messages of my study. Similarly essential for bringing my study down to earth were the critical remarks by my intellectual mentor at the university and friend Dr. Paul Voestermans. He not only helped me to strip my thinking of unnecessary layers, but also showed me how things should be written clearly and concisely. I hope this book is an appreciation of their crucial feedback.

A meeting at Boston University with Prof. Dr. Lee Staples, who eventually became my second supervisor, expanded my research interest. Here the ideas of a comparative approach emerged and developed into an interest in the professional legitimacy of community work. Dr. Peter Westoby, whom I met for the first time in Dublin in 2011, convinced me to pursue the focus on the operational aspects of legitimation in community development.

At that point, in 2009, I got ample support from Prof. Dr. Louis Tavecchio and Dr. Sandra Triezenkens. They guided me to translate this rudimentary notion of professional legitimacy into a viable research proposal. Without their endless efforts to bend my intellectual greed into a scientific attitude, this project would never have succeeded. The preparedness of Prof. Dr. Trudie Knijn to take over their guidance brought this study into a steadier course. It must have been with great courage that she witnessed the mixture of my initially wild ideas, big ambitions and an ever searching mind. She reigned me in with her steadiness until this moment of finalizing this PhD-project. Her expertise, her patience, and wisdom, as well as her connections and her knowledge of the field cannot be valued enough. She supported me almost instinctively, it seemed, when I found focus; and she challenged me as I regularly decided to adopt a new perspective or add a new idea to the study. Similarly, Prof. Dr. Lee Staples, already mentioned as a source of inspiration, was one of the pillars in this process. He meticulously corrected my non-native speaking English writing in earlier versions, as well as in this last version of the book. His encyclopedic knowledge of community development provided a deep source of reference. His connection to the Chelsea Collaborative, a grass-roots community organization, also provided me with a rich context for one of my field studies.

The support I have been able to receive from the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and in particular the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Law has also been of great importance. Former Dean of the Faculty, Willem Baufmalk made it financially possible for me to be able to conduct two field studies abroad. David de Vries and Ellen Hommel, the managers of the Department of Social and Cultural Education kept on convincing me to pursue my research. My current managers, Sander Kos and Joris van Loon gave the decisive push to the last phase of this study by offering me relief from most of my teaching duties this last semester. Wilfred Diekmann and Elke van der Heijden, former Heads of the Amsterdam Research Centre of Social Innovation, knew how to stimulate the progress of my study from the beginning by providing a rich research environment and regu-
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This study was set up as multiple case study. Different people, most of whom did not know me at that time, allowed me to enter their professional and social world. None of the insights of this study could have been acquired without them providing me access to their daily practices, their stories, and their doubts and questions. For this I am grateful for the opportunities the Chelsea Collaborative gave me with their warm encouragement to join them at the public rallies and to include me in their efforts to change the fate of many Chelsea residents. Similarly, I am indebted to the Participation and Activation Employees in Bos and Lommer, and I must make a special reference to the opportunity the late Renske Abbink gave me to work with the social neighborhood team of Landlust and Gibraltar. These were hectic and demanding times for these community workers, and despite this, I was never short of opportunities to meet, join and talk with them. I will never forget the vibrant bi-weekly focus group meetings in the lunch room of De Boeg. My field study in Doornkop, the last of my three, was a confrontation with living conditions I never could have imagined existed. At the same time, the joy, the warmth, the resilience, and the singing of the area leaders and other staff of Child Aid Doornkop will be part of me forever. And, no, I will never forget the jokes you made about me in Zulu, during the farewell lunch. Roland Ngogh, the manager of CAD, was a guide, as well as a wonderful facilitator for my field study in Doornkop. Prof Dr. Leila Patel, eminent scholar and as a former ANC-minister, one of the founders of present day social development policy in South Africa, hosted my presence both socially and intellectually. In the slipstream of these case studies, the transcription work on the interviews by my former students Willeke Binnendijk and Sara Piets gave me the opportunity to focus on my writing.

Intellectually, the emergence of the Dutch Flemish network for the Capabilities Approach in social work contributed to the endurance in the final stages of this book. My already close friends, Collin den Braber and Michel Tirions, were supportive in the earlier stages of my study. But during the last year, I have had the pleasure to become acquainted with Dr. Erik Jansen, Willem Blok, Annica Brummel and Dr. Janny Bennink and their respective work on the Capabilities Approach. Our shared mission to establish momentum for the introduction of the Capabilities Approach in Social Work research in The Netherlands and Flanders gave the writing of the final chapters of this book an extra urgent dimension.

In this final stage of this study, it is still difficult to completely comprehend the crucial role the people in my personal life have played during the last five years. I know that Mike de Kreek is at the moment of writing these acknowledgements also finishing the final draft of his dissertation. For the past five years, he has been my partner in crime at the Faculty of Applied Social Work and Law in Amsterdam. I will never forget our many bonding sessions at work and during the late hours in the pub. Closer to home, I could depend on Nique, Mariska and Ilva who welcomed me back warmly every time I returned home safely. Especially grateful I am for the “father leave of absence” granted me by Roos Scholten, the mother of my daughter Robin. Twice, she had to accommodate my staying abroad for three months. But she also had to bring Robin to the airport twice, since Robin came over to visit me and to travel around the area where I did my field studies. Robin had to endure the many moments her father disappeared into his study downstairs during the weekends and the holidays. I am glad that, when this journey comes to an end, I can start other journeys with you, here, but also in other parts of the world that we did not see together yet. Gwen, my partner, was in this project
from the beginning. She has had to endure the restrictions this work imposed on how we could spend our weekends and the holidays. But she also had to witness the struggles, and the temporary stages of despair that comes with trying to develop coherence in ideas that develop over time. Fortunately, I did not have to resort to the same legitimation strategies of the community workers I studied! Her support was not conditional, but present with obvious great patience.

Finally, after handing over this work to the Assessment Committee, an exciting period will begin. My work will be critically evaluated by a panel of eminent scholars. This represents a rite de passage for me. After all, when the members of the Committee decide to let someone defend their PhD-thesis, it signals an official entry into their world. If I succeed, their role as gatekeepers of the scholarly world gives an extra dimension to this doctorate. But before we are there, I hope the rehearsal session for my defense will be thorough, and the ones who will be scrutinizing me there and then, already are highly appreciated. It will do justice to the intense and intensive five years that I have dedicated to writing this book.
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Roots of this study

In 2011, Mae Shaw, one of the leading scholars in the community development field, stated that community development should subject itself regularly to an “irony check.” She initially draws this plea on a recently held survey among community workers in the United Kingdom. This survey revealed that these community workers in question doubted their ability to pursue the traditional mission of local social transformation and empowerment of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Yet, in general, Shaw also addressed a running debate in the recent scholarly community development literature. This debate concerns the precarious legitimacy of the field. In the slipstream of the economic crisis of 2008, a great many scholars in the field (see for instance Gaynor, 2011; Mowbray, 2010; Scott, 2011) documented a more widespread loss of a sense of professional legitimacy of community development. Economic policies seem to unequally affect the already socially vulnerable groups. In many European welfare states cutbacks in public services (including community support) go hand in hand with appeals to more economic and social self-sufficiency. However, this process of transferring collective responsibilities onto the individual and community level seemingly does not go along with a de facto transference of democratic political participation and control over the community. This, for Shaw, raises

“existential questions for a profession which has traditionally been defined by its role in enhancing democracy through participation; it claims to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of communities and the egalitarian values it espouses.” (Shaw, 2011 p. ii129)

Shaw first remarks on the dependency of community development work upon the sociopolitical environment that it is embedded in. In the postwar period in Europe, much of the ability of professional community work to pursue an agenda of community empowerment rested on the goodwill of the political system. This political system has, after all, both the power to sanction the provision of the financial resources for community development work, as well the legal power to provide the framework for the process of redistribution of power to the local level.

But there is also another, more insidious and enduring process Shaw refers to as requiring that irony check. This concerns the tendency since the 1990s in many welfare states to designate the community level as the anchor point for combating wider social problems such as unemployment, migration and the rising costs of care and public health. This tendency to transfer the solutions for social problems to the community level was and is politically motivated. The political decision-makers justified this “community turn” by pointing to the yet unidentified or unused resources at the community level to provide self-help and social support (Turner, 2009). It was seen as crucial by national and local governments to retrench some of the collective arrangements for social support, care, and health as it was seen as frustrating individual responsibility. Nation states should, on the other hand, enable individuals and communities to adopt responsibility for each other in terms of mutual, neighborly care and support.

At first sight, this tendency of localization, framed in terms such as the “community turn,” (Turner, 2007), “Big Society,” (Tonkens, 2009; Blond, 2010; Scott, 2010), “Active citizenship,” (Gaynor, 2011), “enabling state,’ or, as what in the Netherlands recently has been coined “Participation Society” seems at first sight to represent an acknowledgement of community development’s traditional mission. It stresses, after all, the social and also political potentials of the community. Not surprising-
ly, community work was seen as the appropriate vehicle to implement this agenda of community activation. However, after almost two decades, Shaw (2011 p. ii130) concludes:

“The notion of the ‘enabling state’ implied in this model seems to be conveniently embodied in professional community work, with its traditional emphasis on self-help. In fact, it has been argued that the self-help ethic has performed an important ideological function by reinforcing the attack on the so-called dependency culture in ways which may have actually facilitated the shifts in policy necessary to transmute the ‘public issues’ of the social democratic welfare state into the ‘personal troubles’ of the neoliberal managerial state.”

In other words, the temporary irony check that Shaw propagates concerns the recent implication of community development as collaborative to the dismantling of the social welfare state. But it also signals a more profound and structural problem of community development with its professional legitimacy. This structural problem of legitimacy can be traced back to its historical roots in the social and political transformation movements, as far back as at the end of the 19th century. In that era, the politically conscious and socially engaged upper middle class was trying to find an answer to the social alienation in the inner cities of the rapidly industrializing western countries. These cities had become filled with factories and poor housing. Labor migrants from the countryside and from other countries lived unhealthy lives in poverty and social despair. In these inner cities, lie the roots of the trade unions as a political response to these social inequalities, and of the settlement houses, as a social response to the existential, intellectual and cultural and economic deprivation. Community development emerged here as a political and social reaction against the detrimental effects of industrialization in the West (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Mansuri, 2004; Sennett, 2012; Shaw, 2011). In the 20th century, it increasingly acquired support from the nation states that started to recognize the value of healthy, educated, socially organized and economically empowered labor classes. As a result, these states, as well as their populations, developed in various degrees of comprehensiveness; and after WWII, welfare systems supported or even came to incorporate community work. This incorporation not surprisingly nurtured the professional legitimacy of community development. It became widely recognized as a social strategy to combat the challenges in local living conditions that were a consequence of the economic growth in the post-WWII era.

In the current context, community development as a reformist practice is contested, marked by globalization of economic, cultural and demographic interdependencies. That is the second lead of the search that founded this study. The professional legitimacy of community development is being debated, particularly in those countries where welfare systems are declining for reasons of austerity. Communities based on ethnic, class or religious homogeneity actually do not exist any longer, and an appeal is made to the social responsibility of individual citizens. Here, community development workers seem to be trapped in a double standard of individualization of social responsibilities and communitarization of previous welfare arrangements. As a consequence, they are held responsible – via standardization and accountancy of their efforts – for dealing with that double standard. Shaw states:

“This recourse to ‘the community’ has become an alibi for ‘rolling back’ the welfare system whilst at the same time the performance and audit culture have been ‘rolled out’ through various standardized versions of community engagement and ‘best practice’ regimes as a means of steering or controlling the process” (Shaw, 2011a, p. ii132).

With an initial professional background in Dutch community work, and later as a consultant in local social policy and lecturer in community development, I took hold of this “problematic” position
of the community development field. First of all, in the Dutch context, I recognized the direct impact of periodic welfare state reforms and local financial policies. In the context of the effects of global migration on the local level (increasingly diverse populations), such social policies raise new challenges for community development work and the framing of community issues. The role of community workers was periodically reformulated in terms of how to tackle these existing and emergent social issues at the community level.

These developments shape the local contexts for community work and hence determine what community workers are able to accomplish. In the Netherlands, local governments finance local community development; they set the targets, and they dictate what community development workers are held accountable for. On the one hand, this is a privilege; community development workers do not have to go around the world searching for sponsors, and they are more or less assured of funding and continuation of their work. On the other hand, it implies that local community workers depend on the targets set by local policy and its resources, which define the ability of community workers to engage with local people. It determines whether the community sees the worker as one of their own, or as one of “that” government.

Such regular adjustments in social policy affect the community workers in their capability to build a stable professional relationship with the local community over a longer period of time. For instance, they can change priorities, but also determine whether a community worker will be staffed in another neighborhood. Dependency on local government influences the support community workers will be able to generate for voluntary engagement to improve livability on the streets and in the parks. When local governments decide to cut the funding for community development in neighborhoods, community development organizations look for ways to secure existing community work as much as possible. Therefore, community development organizations usually may try to compensate for these financial restrictions by appointing less formally educated staff. In its turn, this affects the credibility with which community workers can address community issues, or link their efforts with local voluntary civil society organizations. Realizing that this is the situation in the Netherlands, my students regularly raised the question about how universal this problem of professional legitimacy is. This question refers to whether the professional legitimacy of community workers has similar or different foundations in other contexts with different systems of social policy, local governance, and traditions of organizing local civil society. And above all, what actually is the core legitimation of community development work?

In short, the question is whether there is “context dependency” for community workers in the circumstances in which they operate. Against the background of the scholarly debate sketched above, one might suspect that community workers share a sense of responsibility to deal with the local circumstances, no matter the impact of economic realities, local social policy, civil society organizations, and the way volunteers participate in the work. In other words, is there a core characteristic in community development work and consequently, what is the general legitimation of this profession? A study on Dutch community development work by Kremer and Verplancke (2004) provided an intriguing insight about the capability of community workers to manage their professional legitimacy at the local level. This study corrected the image of the community development professional as merely a passive social actor. It provided a number of concrete leads about how to strengthen the sense of legitimacy of community development workers. The authors advocated for a critical, as well as adaptive, attitude towards new demands of governance, science and practice innovations. At the same time, ample anecdotes gave account of the community development workers’ ability to acquire the necessary support for their professional engagement. However, more evidence that systematically examined these abilities to create a legitimate basis for professional com-
munity work is scarce. The active role of community workers, or more technically, the operational capabilities necessary to be able to function professionally has been largely neglected by scholars in the field, as Chapter 2 will demonstrate.

Therefore, this study rephrases Shaw’s call for a temporary irony check into a call for an empirical check. It aims to improve the legitimacy of community development by validating the challenged legitimacy by way of contextualizing the profession. This entails an understanding of the possible constructive, and constitutive contextual elements that nurture the legitimacy of the community worker. Furthermore, it aims to increase the impact of the scholarly literature by increasing its attention to the operational dimension of legitimation. This refers to the community development professionals’ active endeavors to obtain professional legitimacy in terms of a mandate from the community. After all, before any professional engagement with the community is possible, community workers might be expected to, one way or another, develop support for their presence, and to gain credibility for their professional involvement.

1.2. Problem statement

Given current chances in the character and the scope of community development work, there is a need for understanding what constitutes the professional legitimacy of community development professionals as part of their daily interactions with the community. Legitimacy is considered as a prerequisite for any engagement between one social actor and another. Interestingly, there is hardly any literature accounting for the contextual nature of legitimacy in professional community development. In other words, there is a lack of research on — how particular contexts of practice constitute specific forms of professional legitimacy. Secondly, comprehensive studies into the operational dimension of professional legitimation are not yet available. This legitimation refers to the strategies and techniques community development professionals apply to secure their mandate over time. A third knowledge gap regarding community development work relates to what can be seen as generic themes and strategies of legitimation. In an effort to contribute to each of these omissions, this study will analyze professional legitimation in three highly different contexts, by comparing practices of professional legitimation in order to yield some generic themes that possibly reveal specific professional dimensions.

1.3. Scope of the research

The aim of this study is to examine the contextual, operational and generic aspects of professional legitimation in community development practices. Central is the question about how in different contexts of practice, community development professionals are able to obtain their professional engagement with local people over time. This process is not only based on their ability to mobilize support for their professional involvement in the community, but also on recognition of their professional contribution.

There are many assumptions about the historical, ideological or political prerogative of community development. In practice, however, such assumptions may well not be the starting point with which community workers build their professional engagement with the community. Consequently, the question is how community workers in fact negotiate their daily professional involvement with local people, and what these professionals consider as constitutive for their professional legitimacy. After all, a sense of legitimacy might be required for any professional – community collaboration to
be possible at all. Hence, this research focuses on how the professionals actively secure their mandate. More precisely, what will be considered is how they make use of the hints and leads they find in the contexts of the different communities in order to develop a professional mandate. For that reason, the research encompasses a multiple case study of practices of professional legitimation in three professional contexts. These contexts vary first of all with respect to specific local traditions of governance and involvement of local civil society organizations. Furthermore, the selected contexts differ with regard to the developmental needs of the community, and the community resources provided by social policy. Finally, in all three contexts, the professional status of the community workers is different with respect to aspects such as education and individual backgrounds.

Limits to the research as designed and conducted have to be clear from the start. For instance, it does not explicitly take into account the relations between community development professionals and the institutional environment of their local organizations, funders and governments. The focus is on the professional relations with the local community.

Furthermore, this research limits itself to the perspective of professionals. While the case studies will partly draw on participant observations, the key empirical material is drawn from the community workers' reflections and group interviews. Also, while comparative, this research will not draw conclusions as to the causal relationship between context and practices of legitimation. The analysis is not dedicated to a reconstruction of local community development practices with regard to their historical or socio-political influences; these contexts are taken as given in their current situations. Recognizing this limitation is crucial from the start, in order to limit the expectations. The value of the comparison of legitimation practice will prove to be in the variety and commonalities of the reflections of the community development professionals in the three contexts studied. In other words, the focus is on legitimation processes in their relation with the community, as accounted for by the community development professionals. Obviously, references to specific contextual circumstances will appear to be relevant, but only as far as the respondents report them as relevant. The comparison is based on similarities and differences in the accounts of the community development workers about how they manage their professional mandate. This limitation also is important to mention from the start, since it acknowledges the complexity of disentangling the legitimation practices of professionals, their language, and the embedding of community workers in local contexts.

1.4. Overview

This thesis consists of eight further chapters. Chapter 2 will discuss the relevant debates with regard to professional legitimacy in community development in the current scholarly literature. This includes a focus on the themes, as well as the strategies that scholars apply to explain the legitimacy of the field. A predominant focus on the ideological, transformative tradition of community development will emerge. Simultaneously, the chapter outlines the complicated position of community development workers in some western countries, attempting to bring together current political, governmental and economic modes of thought with efforts to empower vulnerable categories of the population. On basis of the scholarly literature, chapter 2 also will argue for the necessity of a contextual, operational and comparative approach to study professional legitimation. Finally, this chapter offers arguments for a focus on the professional agency of community workers in the management of their professional mandate.

In order to support this research ambition, Chapter 3 explores most relevant theoretical notions of legitimation and presents a conceptual framework. First, a taxonomy for the study of legiti-
mation in community development will be outlined. This taxonomy distinguishes the contextual from the operational aspects of legitimation. The focus on how contexts can support the shape of professional mandates is complemented by a focus on the active management of legitimacy by professionals. Consequently, an argument will be developed for an integrative model of explanation. This model will draw on the basic notions of the Capabilities Approach (Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2005, 2006; Sen 1989, 2004, 2010). First, the Capabilities Approach (CA) is a person-centered approach, which acknowledges the impact of the context people live in on their possibilities to be and act according to their own standards. However, it also emphasizes the centrality of the human capability to function according to one’s values and strivings. The CA’s framework is used for studying the perspective of the community workers in their efforts to be able to work according to their own standards. This evaluative framework allows to compare legitimation in the three contexts. It rests on the premise that legitimation is an active endeavor by the professionals to convert contextual characteristics into legitimating resources.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology, the ontological and epistemological foundations for the study, the research strategy, and the procedures followed in case studies. I will outline the critical realist approach in this research, the different logics of explanation and the different analytical techniques.

The consecutive chapters present the most relevant findings from the case studies in Bos en Lommer (Chapter 5), Chelsea (Chapter 6), and Doornkop (Chapter 7). Each of the case studies is built upon: 1) an introduction of the professional context, by sketching the local sociopolitical characteristics, the organization and the tasks and challenges of the local community development professionals; 2) a presentation of the analysis of the constituents of the professional mandate of the community development professionals; and 3) a presentation of the legitimation strategies, linked to the different techniques of converting contextual resources into legitimating resources. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the comparison of the constituents and practices of legitimation as studied in the three contexts. Finally, in Chapter 9 the findings will be discussed. Here the limitations will be highlighted, as well as the theoretical and conceptual implications explored for the study of professional legitimation in community development. The analyses reveal the subtle, complex, vulnerable and conditional, but above all the reciprocal nature of professional-community relationships. Community workers are, in each phase of this evolving relationship confronted with challenges of their mandate. But simultaneously, these professionals show an until now undocumented ability to intelligibly adapt and find new grounds for endured engagements. Although various and specific in their contexts, generic legitimating capabilities characterize the professional mandate of community development workers; capabilities that make up the professional skills of this field of work, whatever the circumstances, contexts and conditions are.
Chapter 2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Introduction

In order to position the contribution of this study within the existing body of knowledge, the recent literature will be explored. This chapter will provide this exploration by following a double track through the literature. The first track runs thematically through the selected literature that deals with legitimacy within the community development field. In the second track, the strategies of scholars to both scrutinize as well as to defend the legitimacy of the field, will be critically reviewed. The reviewed literature includes the articles with references to legitimacy published in the Community Development Journal between 2008 and July 2013. The choice of CDJ was based on the fact that the journal is known for its reflective, as well as analytical and empirical, contributions. It is considered one of the leading journals in the field.1

Recent debates about the legitimacy of community development in general, appear to be connected to a number of historical conjectures. One of these conjectures is the implementation of the Washington Consensus in the 1990s in most developed and developing countries. Here, the question is how the framing of social and economic development in a neoliberal argot has affected the legitimacy of community development. The emphasis on free trade, budgetary control, and the creation of a vibrant private sector, has possibly led to the marginalization of the social reformist practices that traditionally have been associated with community development. Moreover, debates in community development literature about the professionalization of practice will be traced. This somewhat ambiguous position about what to professionalize and how to do so, might shed some light on the struggles in the field to secure a robust professional mandate.

Based on the inventory of the debates with regard to the legitimacy of community development, an argument will be developed for an additional focus. This focus concerns the more practical challenges of legitimacy. These practical challenges are linked to the everyday involvement of professionals with local people. In order to be able to get involved professionally, they will have to develop and sustain a mandate. The ability of professionals to create rapport with the community, might well be crucial for the development of such a mandate.

2.2. Preliminary choices

At first glance, professional legitimacy did not appear to be a major theme in CDJ. Only three publications in CDJ explicitly addressed the issue of “professional legitimacy” (Emejulu, 2011; Shaw, 2008, 2011) This led the researcher to zoom out, and to explore the articles dealing with “legitimacy” in the Community Development Journal between 2008 and 2013, while leaving out “professional” as a keyword.

This zooming out disclosed a number of interesting debates. About 60 articles appeared to mention legitimacy in relation to community development. In order to reconstruct these discussions, an analytic framework was set up which draws from work of the legitimacy theorist Suchmann (1995), complemented by some notions about professional legitimacy by Ghere (2011). Suchmann defines legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and

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1 In Appendix 1, the literature review strategy is outlined. The sample of the literature reviewed is presented in appendix 3.
definitions” (1995, p. 574). Ghere (2011) sees legitimacy as linked to the way organizations can cope with “variations in perceptions” (p. 165).

Suchmann’s perspective emphasizes the systemic nature of legitimacy, while Ghere focuses on legitimation as a process: legitimacy is not a static situation, but subject to variations in perceptions over time. This distinction leads to an acknowledgement of the importance of a historical perspective. After all, while the former focuses on the contextual constraints that foster the legitimacy of social actors, the latter points to the strategies of social actors to adapt and create a fit with the contextual constraints. Both perspectives complement one another. The first perspective allows us to inquire into the interplay between sociopolitical circumstances and community development practices. The second opens the way to explore the agency of professionals to manage challenges to legitimacy.

These preliminary considerations led to the following research questions for the literature review:

1. What has been the debate about the legitimacy of the community development field in the CDJ between 2008 and July 2013? It should be kept in mind that legitimacy can be defined as the situation in which professional community practice is considered to be “desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchmann, 1995, p. 574).
2. What strategies were applied by scholars and professionals to scrutinize and critique, as well as to defend, the legitimacy of community development as professional practice?

2.3. Legitimacy in community development

In this section will be examined how in recent community development literature the issue of professional legitimation in community development has been discussed.

2.3.1. A short historical background

In order to set the background of these discussions about community development’s legitimacy, a short historical examination of its tradition might be helpful as a start. In Together (2012), the sociologist Richard Sennett unravels different historical notions of community organization against industrialization in the 19th century in the North of Europe and the United States of America. Reformist movements arose as a reaction to the social effects of these industrialization processes. According to Sennett, these movements started to apply the idea of “community” in two ideal meanings. First was the sense of the social, aiming to restore community life, while cherishing an ideal of sociability. This refers to the ability to entertain social relations in a civil manner. The second notion of community was the community in the political sense. As a political entity, it could strive to reform society by means of organizing itself as a political actor. This refers to the emergence in and around factories of a more or less “autonomous” resistance fueled by labour unions against the dire circumstances of workers.

After WW II, community development increasingly became “governmentalized.” In the western hemisphere, it became part of the mission of social democracies to establish social equality. At the same time, community development as a strategy was instrumental for establishing economic prosperity for the poor and the working class (Campfens, 1997). As a result, community develop-
ment became a tool to redistribute wealth, as well as to enhance the political, cultural and social emancipation of the working class. In the other regions of the world, which suffered from an economic backlash due to decolonization processes, community development was implanted as a tool for economic redevelopment (Mansuri, 2004). A second form of community development, is community work as a political practice. This politicizing form of community development targets the dominant social and political forces responsible for social injustices. For instance, pressuring society for structural changes was, and still is, exemplified by the practices of community organizing in the United States of America (Alinsky, 1981; Delgado, 2000; Staples, 2016). This form of transformational community development differs from community development that was adopted by most of the European welfare states after WWII as an instrument to implement social welfare strategies (Emejulu & Bronstein, 2011; Shaw, 2008), while this type of governmental community development still is part of social policy in the US.

Campfens (ibid, p. 14) argues that this social democratic agenda of community development has suffered from a neoconservative revolution since the 1980s. In his view, this has led to three crucial tendencies. First, there has been a reduction of the role of the state, entailing a shift from the primacy of the collective to the primacy of the individual as the unit of responsibility. Secondly, there has been a dismantling of state care arrangements, in favor of community care. This is associated with an increasing appeal to voluntary community involvement and self-help. Thirdly, there has been tax reform, decreasing the states’ budgets for collective arrangements, while at the same time increasing individuals’ wealth. These tendencies run through the reconstruction of current debates about the legitimacy of community development.

2.3.2. The community turn

The study of the articles that appeared between 2008 and mid 2013 in CDJ with "legitimacy" as a keyword, reveals a conspicuous presence of debates about the recent changing role of the nation state. More specifically, what is tangible in the literature is the transition of the significance of nation states in favor of the community. The community experiences a revival, as both a framework to analyze, as well as an instrument to tackle social problems. There is, however, considerable variety in how this transition has been labeled.

In Europe, scholars adopted the notion of the “community turn” (Cornwall, 2008; Shaw, 2011). This term is used to describe the switch in European welfare regimes around the end of last century from the state to the community. This was launched as part of modernization of welfare arrangements. But also in industrializing countries like the BRICS nations, there seems to be a sturdy conviction that local communities should be more involved in both the formulation, as well as the implementation, of social policies (De Beer, 2013; Kamlongera, 2013). Political projects were launched, such as “Big Society” in the UK (Carpenter, 2010; Dinham & Shaw, 2011; Robson & Spence, 2011), and “active citizenship” in Ireland and the continent (Daly, 2008; Gaynor, 2009; Lewis, 2012).

Not surprisingly, this acknowledgement of the community as an anchor point for social development has raised a number of debates in CDJ. First, what is critically evaluated is whether the community is indeed the social agent that is allowed to voice local concerns; whether it is able to combat social issues; and if it has the real power to resist official government policies (Cornwall, 2008; Lam, 2012; McCabe, 2012). Second, the role of non-governmental actors as providers of social services at the community level is criticized for their inclination to implement top-down community development strategies (Hicks, 2011; Robson & Spence, 2011). Thirdly, several authors (Gaynor, 2011; Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009) raise concerns about the ability of communities that very
often are already socially deprived to compensate for the decline of funding for social and community services. Fourthly, and related to the former three, is the so called “community trap.” People are lured into the belief that all social problems are a matter of community agency, that is to say, that these issues are primarily the concerns and responsibility of the community itself, as the prime source of change (Shaw, 2011b).

2.3.3. A pragmatic fit with modernizing governance

In these debates about the recent emphasis on the community as one of the most prominent sources for social development, both implicit and explicit claims are made. These claims implicate the position and legitimacy of professional community development practice. They position community development as a practice instigated to implement government control at the community level. Critics claim that this notion of community development reinforces the existing social, economic, political and cultural inequalities.

Resonating with this notion of the community as the spindle of social development and inclusion strategies, are community development experiments with corporate social responsibility (Kamlongera, 2013), public dialogue (Eguren, 2008), community-driven ecological sustainability (De Beer, 2013; Lineal & Laituri, 2013), and socio-economic development (Settle, 2012).

This recent appropriation of community development as part of modernizing social and economic governance has its critics. According to Settle (2012), de facto, a neoliberal agenda has been laid out with “community” as an instrumental concept that disconnects community development from its reformist roots.

How this instrumental approach in community development affects the legitimacy of the field, has lately become a matter of considerable debate. The question is how community development’s apparent incorporation into a policy-driven approach, and, as Martin Mowbray (2011) claims, a “neoliberal” development agenda, affects its professional legitimacy.

Indeed, and with considerable consensus, community development has been scrutinized insofar as it has become an instrument of a neoliberal agenda (Fung & Hung, 2011). The traditional regulating role of nation states to soften the negative effects of economic tendencies seems to have become obsolete. Global institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank, but also regional financial institutions such as the EMF, now dominate. These institutions not only dictate the margins of national economic policies, but also deal with local civil societies within an almost exclusively economic framework. This leads to the pushing of local-level development strategies with the promising logic of economic prosperity.

In this neoliberal sociopolitical context, community development strategies seem to derive their legitimacy from their instrumental, pragmatic “fit.” Notions such as “asset-based” and “locality-based” development trigger associations with economic prosperity as the central aim of human development. As such, it is conceivable that the emphasis on establishing new forms of local civil society governance does not merely signify a genuine effort towards democratization at the local level. For instance, Fung and Hung (2011) suspect that even the contrary is happening: depoliticizing of the local. They express a concern about the inability of community development practitioners to instigate, as well as to mobilize, a mass constituency for a more critical, transformational development agenda. They ask for strategies that could resist “governments of developed and developing countries [to] manipulate the ‘community’ as a policy tool in the current era of neo-liberalist economic globalization” (Fung & Hung, 2011, p. 459).
The question arises, “In whose interest are community development practices initiated?” Some raise questions with regard to the legitimacy of the community development industry, including whether practitioners are active in the interest of the community or in the interest of themselves or the government (Bunyan, 2013). For instance, in a study on the implementation of community-based fire management in Honduras, Lineal and Lanturi (2013 p. 71) ask themselves: “How does devolution of responsibilities to local groups serve to empower and influence collective management of forest resources? What role do external linkages to NGOs, regional government, and neighboring communities play in improving local management and empowering marginal communities?” Also in other studies of the implementation of rural development programs, such as in Pakistan (Settle, 2012), Bolivia and Guatemala (Eguren, 2008), the domination of technical rationality and the absence of political debate in community development processes is being scrutinized.

2.3.4. Annexation in social policy frameworks

Professional community development practice is shaped – at least partially and depending upon specific national traditions – by both design and execution of social policies. The social policies usually range from labor market initiatives, migrant work, housing, adult education, women’s rights, to support of families and people with disabilities. During the last two decades, the social sector in a great number of welfare states and developing countries has experienced a number of structural changes, thereby impacting the professional legitimacy of community development organizations and the professionals who work in these entities.

Social policy is generally defined as a political framework to define, as well as to distribute, collective means to promote social welfare in general: “Social policy primarily refers to guidelines and interventions for the changing, maintenance or creation of living conditions that are conducive to human welfare (Vargas-Hernandez, 2011). Traditionally, it was the privilege of the nation state to define policy projects aiming to support groups-in-need.

For social policy in many European countries, the community became a framework and a tool for common action, but also for raising awareness based on common interests, either locally or thematically. While much community organizing in the USA has been able to remain connected to its radical roots, in European welfare states, the “leftist” roots of community development have been increasingly appropriated by social policy. Shaw (2008, p. 24) remarks that “[I)n a context in which ‘community empowerment’ is virtually government policy, it is hardly surprising that there is almost no area of social policy that is immune from the community treatment” (Fung & Hung, 2011).

Where community development has been incorporated in official social democratic policy systems, in the last decades it has been confronted with profound structural changes. More specifically, these changes occurred with the implementation of New Public Management (NPM) in the public sector. Based on the growing dissatisfaction of the political classes with the slow and costly bureaucratic procedures for dividing public means amongst social services providers, government policy since the 1980s has started to implement market-like principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the private sector (Ravensbergen & VanderPlaat, 2009).

Overall has the impact of the introduction of NPM on social work practices, such as community development, been negatively evaluated by a great many scholars in the field. One of the most problematic features has been the prevalence of managerialism (Clark and Newman, 1997; Scott, 2011). Managerialism is the tendency to let the organizational aspects of professional service delivery prevail over professional logic. This prevalence of the logic of service provision has produced a “third-
sector modernization with its argot of being ‘fit for purpose’ and ‘contract-ready’ that has failed to connect with the sector’s moral imperative” (Scott, 2011, p. 134).

Another, inherent, source of friction that threatens convergence in the relationship between social policy and community development, is the permanent threat of depoliticizing community action. Central is the tension between the role of the nation state, and the position of the community as an anchor point for social development (Mowbray, 2011a). But in the background, there are disagreements about the gradual disconnection of the political meaning of community in the social policies of the European welfare states. According to several scholars (Gaynor 2011; Scott, 2010) the local has been especially detached from its political meaning as the place where people are supported to develop collective action against social injustices. This type of political community development seems to have become marginalized, according to Ravensbergen and VanderPlaat (2009). In social policy, the recognition is fading for the value of access to, and work with, marginalized groups. According to Gaynor, referring to “active citizenship” is a social policy buzzword: “Active citizenship appears a panacea for dealing with much of the social fallout of our time” (2009, p. 28).

2.3.5. Professional practice versus transformative movement

Over the years, the professionalization of practice within the field of community development has been a subject of much debate. Professionalization refers herein to a tendency of formalization to distinguish professional from non-professional practices. Since the 1960s, occupational fields such as psychotherapy and management have begun to develop a set of distinguishable standards, techniques, and transferable knowledge (Wilensky, 1964). For community development, this professionalization seems at first sight to be at odds with its own professional ideology. After all, one of the cornerstones of its practice is to cherish local knowledge and practices as a source for social change (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). Professionalization in terms of formalized education, professional standards and exclusive expertise, does not resonate so well with such democratic practice principles.

However, this study will treat community development as a professional practice. In this capacity it has been linked to state involvement, and consequently, a process of professionalization was set in motion. This was especially the case in countries such as Ireland (Gaynor, Apos, & Brien, 2012), the UK (Shaw & Crowther, 2013), Belgium (Hautekeur, 2003), South Africa (De Beer, 2013), Spain, Hungary and The Netherlands (Hautekeur, 2005), Australia (Kemp, 2010), and New Zealand (Chile, 2006). This proliferation of professional community development, either in or alongside the state, has led to the development of different forms of regulation, registration, funding, and accountability, varying from state to state.

Looking at the literature, it becomes clear that the incorporation of community development as a policy strategy, with the subsequent “official” recognition of the pragmatic value of community-based development approaches, indeed inherently came to challenge community development’s radical and reformist tradition. Publications explicitly discussing professionalization, are quite equivocal in their criticism of the process of professionalization that community development has been subject to. Authors such as Turner (2009) and Gaynor (2011, 2014) are critical towards the shift of community development from a transformative practice into a form of public services. This shift has, for instance, been associated with standardization (Vanderplaat, 2009), depoliticizing local develop-

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2 This section makes use of additional literature sources, either from the CDJ and other journals and books. This expansion of scope of the literature was required to be able to enrich the discussion of professionalization with concepts and contrasting views on notions of professionalization. The additional sources, outside the CDJ, will be italicized. See Appendix 1 for the procedure of this literature review, and Appendix 3 for the sample for the reviewed literature.
mment issues (Aimers, 2011; Gaynor, 2011; Scott, 2011) and the dominance of the white, middle-class male professional (Pyles, 2011; Robson & Spence, 2011), as well as the rise of the educated outsider expert perspective (Kenny, Fanany, & Rahayu, 2013; Nelson, Babon, Berry, & Keath, 2008). For instance, Kenny observed how community development professionals operate in communities in Indonesia:

“... development practitioners are often caught between commitment to donors to spend aid money effectively and meet goals (Wallace, Bornstein and Chapman, 2006) and commitment to the recipients of aid to improve their lives (McGregor, 2009). In the process of ‘knowing what is best’, professionals undermine the capacities of those they are helping and in so doing, they block the nurturing of ordinary people’s own capacities (Nair, 2003) and remain agents of control.” (p. 285)

Others, such as Shaw (2008, 2011), Shaw and Crowther (2013), Daly (2008), and, earlier, Kremer and Verplancke (2004) acknowledge both the risk, as well as the professional challenge, that comes with the process of professionalization in community development. The question is whether it is tenable to exclusively attempt to hold on to the radical/transformative tradition of community development. Rather, these authors seem to have adopted a more pragmatic position: they acknowledge that community development has become a part of a wider social planning and development strategy of local governments. As such, they are more inclined to view this transformation of community development into a professional practice as representing a new phase in the professionalization of community development. Thereby, they see a number of novel issues rising. These issues concern the organization and design of community development practices in Europe and elsewhere. For Daly (2008), for instance, the recognition of community development in Ireland as a professional practice also entails a formal recognition of local democracy and the vital contribution of civil society to address social issues. At the same time, “there is a need to ensure that participation in partnership arrangements does not enhance divisions between voluntary and community organizations” (p. 165).

Shaw (2008) pleads for a perspective transcending the dichotomy between the transformative/political on the one side and the professional on the other, as this dichotomy is

“... inherently problematic because the inference is that any alternative to the professional approach is unprofessional or, indeed, incompetent. Conversely, professionalism is deemed, from this standpoint, to be non-ideological and non-political. [The] distinction between ‘technicist’ and ‘transformational’ approaches to professional community development may be more helpful by suggesting that different purposes can and should be contested as the legitimate scope of professionalism.”

She concludes:

“In other words, community development is both a professional practice and a political practice. It is, therefore, important to emphasize that the distinction is a conceptual tool for analytic purposes rather than a dichotomy in which one has to choose sides.” (p. 27)

As will become clear in the following sections, not only for scholars, but also for community development professionals, there is a dilemma in which position to choose, as Mowbray says: “in, with or against the state” (Mowbray, 2010).

The handling of the ambiguities that come with the hybrid position of community development, that is both a professional, and at the same time a transformative practice, is central in this study. Resolution of these sometimes conflicting perspectives is considered to be one of the central practical professional challenges for community development professionals. How are community
development professionals able to simultaneously engage in these two forms of practice? First, they must enter into a triangular working relationship with the community, the state and the marketplace. At the same time, they also might have to create legitimacy for transformative practices which can well lead to challenges of these same governmental or economic actors, when they are not acting in the interest of the community. The question is, for now, “How has the community development literature discussed these challenges in terms of professionalization? Central in the “professionalism thesis” is the tenet that certain distinctive features of professions can protect their exclusive practices from too much interference from the state, the market, or both. Protection against intrusion from these “outsiders” could foster “true” professionalism, an attitude whereby a professional has no other goals to pursue than to do the work appropriately and to work in favor of the wider community and in the general interest.

According to Friedson (2001), ideal-type professions, such as the medical and the legal, have been able to develop a societal sanction in the form of “a set of interconnected institutions providing the economic support and social organization that sustains the occupational control of work” (2001, p. 2). As a result, these professions have been able to resist the forces of material self-interest of the market (market logic) and control by bureaucracy regimes (bureaucratic logic). Friedson posits that professionalism—as the third logic—can flourish when professional control of work exists. Accordingly, he argues that ideal-professions have, in more or less degree, control in terms of: (1) the development of specialized expert knowledge; (2) jurisdiction over the execution of practice, or a form of discretionary space; (3) protection of access to the profession; (4) training and education; and (5) a specific professional ideology. In the following paragraphs, we will see how community development as a professional practice has been able to appropriate aspects of this professional control in one or more of these five domains. This might clarify some general issues with regard to the institutional and practical conditions that pose a challenge for the professional legitimacy of community development.

Specialized expert knowledge. The first domain claimed to necessarily be under the control of professionals is the development of specialized or expert knowledge. Expert knowledge is a product of theory, information, facts, methods, and skills that has evolved through practice experience and specialized educational processes into an area of mastery that is the exclusive purview of a particular profession. During a period of professionalization a body of knowledge is developed that has “transcendent” or “esoteric” qualities. These qualities require that professionals need to be socialized into a specific field in order to be able to grasp and evaluate the value of that knowledge (Friedson, 2001). The existence and legitimacy of expert knowledge in community development is connected in the literature with the exclusivity of that knowledge the validity of its theoretical foundation and practice-based sources, and its ability to implement effective strategies for social change.

First of all, there is the question whether community development had been able to appropriate a specific domain of expert knowledge. This expertise might set it apart from other knowledge domains as an instrument to acquire legitimacy in the practice field. For instance, Chipeniuk (2008) points to the “labyrinthic” concepts of community development (such as “community” and “empowerment”). But, those labyrinthic qualities hardly seem to contribute to recognition as a profession. On the contrary, the professional concepts used in community development have a hard time competing with the alleged clarity of the concepts used by planners. However, the potential for these alleged labyrinthic concepts to complicate the evolution and maturation of a formalized system of knowledge is not the only challenge for community development theory. There also is a lack of professional exclusivity in the field of development, and this circumstance might limit the options for claiming an exclusive expert status. Gradener and Spierts (2006) doubt whether the appropriation of
a distinct domain of knowledge is even possible in community development. Social and development-
al issues are not exclusively reserved for community development to address, since in addition to
the social sciences, politicians, policy makers and other experts also claim a say in these matters.

A second theme concerns the legitimacy of professionals’ knowledge. For instance, Cornwall
(2008) questions whose knowledge is to be held as legitimate: the community professionals’
knowledge or that from the actual communities. This question is especially relevant, if, like Eguren
(2008), one is aware of the disparity in knowledge. Local communities sometimes experience a dis-
avantage in knowledge regarding procedures and facts in community development processes. Set
against the professional imperative of community development as an empowering practice, one
might indeed question the legitimacy of a practice that is not capable of disclosing relevant
knowledge to involved communities.

Eversole (2012) provides another angle on the role of expert knowledge in community devel-
opment practice. She raises a more fundamental question, which is why community-based, “lived
knowledge” is so often discarded as irrelevant. The demands for “robustness” attendant to the es-
established forms of knowledge endanger the legitimacy of the input from local people.

“Community challenges to ‘established knowledge’ and ‘hard data’ can easily be dismissed as untest-
ed and even irrelevant to the question at hand; while agendas travelling under the cloak of data and
evidence are harder to challenge. Biases easily become embedded simply in the way development is-
ues are defined and the categories used (‘unemployed women’, ‘rural families’, ‘enterprise’). Yet us-
using scientific tools to measure the categories gives the resulting knowledge a legitimacy that lived ex-
erience does not share. Thus, while participatory processes may willingly seek community input or
opinions, few give weight to community knowledge” (p. 35).

So it is not only the alleged “fuzziness” of the concepts, connected to the knowledge base of
community development that challenges the legitimacy of the community development profession-
als’ expertise. It is also the hegemony of experts’ claims, working with evidence-based knowledge. It
is an accepted form of common sense among community development scholars that attempts to
demarcate the specific area of expertise of community development professionals need to be scruti-
nized. Every time, one has to acknowledge who is doing the naming and framing of problems. For
instance, Emujulu (2011) remarks that acknowledging the expertise of community development pro-
fessionals leads to a framing of the professional as the “capable, rational and (sometimes) visionary”
expert and the community as the site of problems. This bears the risk that the problems community
development professionals observe in local settings will become paramount in development pro-
cesses, rather than the problems experienced by the local residents themselves. Positioning expert
knowledge in the professional domain of community development disqualifies the “lived experi-
ence” of the community, as it only recognizes the perspectives of community development practi-
tioners.

Jurisdiction of domain of practice. A second feature of professions is, according to Freidson
(2001), their ability to organize a judicial discourse over the execution of practice. No specific litera-
ture was found about this aspect of professionalization. Such a formalized, discretionary space in the
community development field was not mentioned at all; it seems not to exist. Of course, in various
countries there are boards of review that have the power to sanction violations, especially with ref-
erence to codes of ethics of Social Work, such as the professional ethics code of the International
Federation of Social Work³. But specifically for community workers, the literature search did not

³ http://cdn.ifsw.org/assets/Socialt_arbete_etik_08_Engelsk_LR.pdf
yield any discussions about jurisdictional aspects. An explanation for this omission might be that in most developed countries, community development gradually became an integral part of official policy strategies, which might have upheld the development of this type of professional discretion. Practitioners’ considerations hereby seem to have become rather futile over the years. For instance, Robson and Spence (2011) remark that “[t]he evaluation and funding of community development became implicitly linked with local government performance management instruments such as local area agreements. Such a framework demands a model of professional practice, which is technically neutral and serves policy expectations” (p. 294). In other words, due to its instrumental function in broader social policy, community development practice might have been prevented from developing a framework wherein normative evaluations could be made with regard to the execution of practice.

For Shaw (2011) formalized boundaries in the profession would indeed strip practice from its social and political connotations,

“(…) reducing community development to a set of programmatic principles and processes which can be applied in any situation, because it strips professional practice of the necessity to argue over and articulate its wider social purpose and to make the necessary distinctions which might justify its distinctiveness and its potential to make a difference.” (p. iii 37)

There is, however, some form of “discretionary spaces,” community development practitioners indeed do occupy. These are found in the distinctions, such as “community” and “professional” that community development has developed over the years. Emeyulu (2011) observed how these distinctions evolved into a professional discourse which sets the professional apart from the community, whereby the former is seen as the expert, and the latter as a site packed with problematic notions. “For community development to maintain its relevance and legitimacy, practitioners and theorists will need to take seriously the challenge of identity construction and consider how community development can be transformed into a practice which is based on democracy, equality and respect” (p. i 130).

Control over education and access to the labor market. Control over education and access to the labor market, are said to be two other domains that professionals can manage in order to create professional legitimacy. Such a formalization would require more or less comprehensive systems of codification, examination, and validation of community development education, and this would need to be under control of community development professionals and their organizations. Furthermore, it would also entail that only the formally trained can have access to professional community development practice. Both in developed and developing countries various systems of community development education and degrees in community development exist (see for instance Hautekier 2005 in Europe; De Beer, 2013 in South Africa). However, there are only a few articles in the community development literature, that discuss the professionals’ control over both formal education in community development and labor market access, and how that could affect the legitimacy of the field (Ibanez-Carrasco & Riano-Alcala, 2009; Murray, 2012)

Not surprisingly, considering the discussions so far with regard to how community development scholars evaluate features of professionalization, reflections on this aspect are dominant. Scholars are not overly enthusiastic about what formalization of community development education and access to the labor market would mean for the legitimacy of practice. There is a consensus that a formal system of determining who can and cannot study community development, and who can and cannot work as a community development professional, does not fit well with the profession’s own ideology. Such a stance would seem to result in the community development field adopting the same “exclusionary” mechanisms that communities encounter in their endeavors to develop a critical
voice. For instance, Daly (2008) considers selection mechanisms in education and professional community development as systems that are part of the “shadow state.” Ibañez-Carusco and Riaño-Alcalá (2011), plea in that sense for a “community before universities” strategy in collaborative community projects. Since students and scholars already are privileged with knowledge, the learning and education of local people should be in the forefront of these projects. Only secondarily should these projects aim for the education of students and scholars.

For Lin, Gabbard, Hwang and Jaggers, (2011), control over education and over access to the labor market could very well be a requisite for professional legitimacy of community development. Against the background of an emerging community development practice in China, these authors note:

“The almost complete reliance on volunteers with little training has led to concerns regarding not only the quality of services, but also the violation of fundamental values and ethics such as confidentiality and human dignity” (p.129).

**Professional ideology.** The question remains, “How do scholars and practitioners evaluate the legitimizing potential of the professional ideology of community development?” Governments and the market sector have in the last decades been appropriating participatory approaches that initially came out of the community development field as social-transformative strategies. On the other hand, scholars also are observing that alongside this appropriation, the radical reformist ideology itself is under increasing pressure. According to authors such as Aldred (2009), the appropriation of community development strategies by policy and market parties has stripped the field of its “adversarial” connotations. For instance, McCabe (2012) observes that these radical roots provide the community development professional with ample opportunities to think “outside the box”, especially now that policy jargon and community development practices have become so entangled. Shaw (2011, p. iii40), consistent with the latter view, remarks, “Reviewing the value base of community development should be a core professional activity – as a means of continuously rejuvenating everyday practice.”

**2.4. Key messages from the literature**

The aim of this review so far has been to identify how the legitimacy of community development has been discussed in recent literature. More specifically, the question of the legitimacy of the field has been explored against the background of systematic changes over the years in social policy, local and global governance, and professionalization. A number of key messages can be derived from this exploration of debates in the Community Development Journal between 2008 and mid-2013.

3. After WWII, a close connection arose in social democracies between government and professional community development. Despite national differences in implementation and legitimation, both in developed countries and in post-colonial regimes, community practices were almost intrinsically linked with local, national and international agendas for social, economic and environmental development. This relationship as presented the community development tradition of social and political reform with an almost permanent threat of disconnection from its radical roots.

4. The recent appropriation by governments of local civil society has become an instrument, as well as a source, for social change. Increasingly, community development is be-
ing applied as a safety net to compensate for budget cuts in social service provision in western welfare states. This leads to the instrumentalization of community engagement;

5. Government and other parties have incorporated participation practices. This incorporation is fused with a neo-liberal translation of empowerment and community agency, further robbing the traditional reformist ideology of community development of its transformative meaning;

6. The implementation of new public management and the increasing role of third sector parties in policy implementation have fostered a specific professionalization of community development practice which is purported to mirror the technical, rational means-and-ends oriented logic.

These legitimacy challenges predominantly are formulated with reference to the political and reformist roots of community development. Hence, the subsequent scrutiny of many community development scholars can best be understood as a defense of community development as a practice of social transformation through education, democratization and political action. If one refers to the legitimacy of community development, usually the social legitimacy of the systemic forces of policy and economy are challenged. In these efforts to defend and restore the legitimacy of community development, scholars suggest a range of revitalization strategies.

2.5. Responses to the challenged legitimacy of the reformist roots of community development - and its limitations

The question is, “How have community development scholars responded to these processes of appropriation and depoliticizing, as well as the recent ideological “neoliberal” framing of community development?” In other words, what remedies to defend or restore the legitimacy of the field have been proposed, or even applied in the literature between 2008 and mid-2013? By identifying these strategies, this study can position its contribution to the existing body of knowledge about the professional legitimacy of community development.

In what follows, the scholarly responses to the challenges of professional legitimacy in community development will be discussed. Three general legitimation strategies can hereby be discerned: (1) A historical response. This traces current legitimacy issues back to their origin in the specific professional historical emergence of community development; (2) A politicizing response. This aims to demonstrate how continuous “hegemonic” impediments by social and political institutions are directed towards the encapsulation of community development. Consequently, this leads to a (predominantly scholar) contestation of community development’s legitimacy; and (3) An ideologizing response. This attempts to revive and reissue the actual emancipating and transformative roots of community development.

2.5.1. Historicization

The first strategy, historicization, aims to reconstruct how and why current community development practices in Europe and elsewhere have been plagued by tendencies at the macro-social level since the 1990s. For instance, the incumbent mix of neo-liberal ideologies and solidarity rhetoric stresses communities’ responsibility to combat social problems. At this macro-social level, institutional changes are analyzed according to their repercussions for community development practices.
Macro-social tendencies are then set against the historical background of community development as it was originally conceived by influential thinkers such as Alinsky (1971), and Freire (1970). In essence, these are “macro-causal” analyses (Skocpol & Somers, 1980). They lead to a comparison of current, emergent sociocultural constraints of community development practices with the original historical circumstances and roots of the reformist tradition of community development practices. Jha (2009), Emejulu (2011), and Shaw (2008) apply this historicizing perspective. Shaw, for instance, identifies one of the historical pitfalls, current community development is subject to:

“It is important to remember that the contradictory provenance of community development with its roots in both benevolent welfare paternalism and autonomous working-class struggle (Ballock, 1980) has created a curiously hybrid practice, which has awkwardly (and sometimes unconvincingly) embodied both of these meanings simultaneously” (2008, p 26)

In 2011, Shaw redirects her historical exploration on the legitimacy of community development with the assessment that:

“[…] various forms of community development have been centrally implicated in the process of modernization, in some cases as a strategic agent of the modernization agenda: facilitating partnership working, applying set standards of community engagement, capacity building around pre-determined outcomes and managing the performativity culture.” (Shaw, 2011, p133)

Such a historicizing response highlights the interconnectedness of sociopolitical developments and professional community development. The second type of response, the politicizing response, is more defensive, as well as provocative. Here, community development scholars evaluate the late macro-social developments as negative, and at the same time, they seek confrontation between current practices and the normative foundations of community development. It is this normative evaluation that marks its difference with the historicizing perspective.

2.5.2. Politicization

By politicization, scholars identify structural social tendencies that have a negative impact on social practices. Part of this politicization strategy in community development is to make explicit that both in democratic and non-democratic political systems, community development runs a permanent risk of losing its autonomy as a practice due to its political connotations. This autonomous practice is being challenged, either by becoming incorporated or impeded, by powerful political, and economical institutions.

Geoghegan (2009) offers one example of politicization, seeing bureaucracy as such an impeding force that it challenges the emancipatory goals of community practice. On the other hand, Mowbray (2011) views the democratic legitimacy of local governments as a vehicle for community development strategies. Additionally, Barron (2010) scrutinizes the degree of competitiveness in the community development business as at odds with the mission of community development to empower local people. Finally, Dixon’s (2011) attempt to liberate the “struggle of local people for voice” over basic commodities such as the food system from the dominant capitalist rhetoric of profit is informative.

“It reminds us that food’s very fundamental human and ecological character introduces a lifeworld authority that constantly undermines the market authority of corporations and the bureaucratic authority of states” (p. I 33).
2.5.3. Ideologization

A third strategy that aims to reconstruct the legitimacy of community development is the ideologizing strategy. That is, the strategy to legitimize the normative principles of community development by reference to the original ideologies of reformist political, ecological and economical movements. In this ideologization, community development is being re-established in that original reformist framework. That way, community development scholars and practitioners can actualize its own normative foundations as reformist practice and link it to the grassroots activism that was rekindled through a revival during the first Obama campaign in 2007 and 2008 (Emejulu, 2009) or the emerging political activism in Hong Kong (Lam, 2012). This third strategy attempts to reiterate the “just” ways of engaging with communities. A great number of articles implicitly attempt to revive the professional ideology of community development, stressing aspects such as “bottom up” approaches, radical democracy, and the maximum involvement of local knowledge and cultural practices aimed at reducing power disparities at the local level.

What connects the three responses outlined above to challenges of legitimacy in the community development literature? In general, all three reflect how external developments influence practice. They do that by reviewing the current features of practice from different comparative perspectives. This demonstrates either the historical, political or ideological entanglement of the community development field with social, political and economic forces. These perspectives hold an important intellectual appeal for scholars and practitioners not to take practice at its own face value, but rather to permanently scrutinize it, seeing practices as specific responses to changing social and political circumstances.

2.5.4. Limitations of these responses and a proposal for an additional perspective

However, these somewhat defensive and restorative strategies do have their limitations. First of all, all three are limited in their generalizability. Although the reviewed literature covers a great number of nations on several continents, nevertheless, these scholars bear a risk of overgeneralizing, since subtle variations exist in sociopolitical traditions within different regions of the world (see for instance the conclusions of Duyvendak and De Haan, 1997 with regard to the liberal roots of community development as a social development strategy in the Netherlands). Acknowledging these variations might possibly lead to different conclusions. For instance, would a non-historical perspective comparing different contexts of practices not yield a more nuanced view of the impact of institutional developments on community development practices?

Secondly, the responses in the community development field reviewed above reveal a tendency to assume a form of historical, political and ideological causality. In fact, these three forms of legitimation of the historical reformist roots of community development are a form of causal analysis, which might overstate the impact of the structural challenges. In essence, this approach scrutinizes the legitimacy of the functioning of institutions that form the constraints of current community development practice. The literature predominantly tends to assert how the nation state, the market, third sector organizations, social planning agencies, and local democracy fail to respond adequately to processes of social inequality and exclusion. Hereby, they mark the professional legitimacy of community development as a countervailing force.

While this review does not contest the value of these causal assessments, nevertheless, it maintains that the current literature tends to ignore the impact of community development as a pro-
fessional practice. Some historical research (see for instance Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2005; and Spierts, 2014) seems to suggest that community development has been influencing the responsiveness of political and social institutions. The mere presence of professionals mediating between the community level and local level governance is said to soften the hegemonic tendencies of policy and planning agencies.

In other words, the prevailing focus on the systemic forces shaping daily practices of community development practitioners might well be complemented - for instance, how community development professionals appropriate a form of professional legitimacy, not only at an institutional level, but also in street-level interactions with community members in different traditions of civil organization.

This study proposes such an endeavor, as it aims to clarify these more operational aspects in the creation of professional legitimacy. By drawing on ideas about professional agency (Flyvbjerg, 2001), it acknowledges the community development professional as a skillful actor, applying strategies for legitimation. This legitimation not only affects his direct environment, but might also position and reposition community development vis a vis civic and state organizations.

2.6. Contribution of this study to the existing field of knowledge

This study is embedded in the ongoing debates about the legitimacy of community development as sketched in previous sections. At the same time, it will shift its focus to the community development professionals as agents of legitimacy, as the ones who are enmeshed in the daily challenges of professional legitimacy. As such, besides a shift in focus, the research also entails a change to a more inside-out perspective in order to examine the challenges of legitimacy. That is, the experiences and reflections of professionals will be central. Hereby the study acknowledges Emejulu’s (2010) warning not to take for granted fixed notions “about the professional and the community”, that could underpin the professional legitimacy of community development; it is as well indebted to Shaw’s (2011) proposal for a recurrent irony check with regard to the pretenses of professional community development.

The three case studies will be conducted in three different regions of the world: Western Europe, North America, and Africa. The research activities are aiming to create insight into the “nuts and bolts” of the daily practices of community development workers in their search for a professional mandate. “Professional mandate” is herein considered as a license to operate awarded by active community members, the larger community and other actors involved.

This perspective on professional legitimacy is in line with what scholars such as Owen and Westoby (2011) have been favoring: giving attention to the “strategic” aspects in practice. Acknowledgement of the need to also consider this strategic dimension, leads to a particular view of the professional in the community development field. It considers the professional as a skillful, versatile change agent, working not with pre-formatted strategies, but in an open, dialogical relationship with an often conflicting and most of the time, unpredictable, environment. This demanding practice requires practical reasoning, or –as Flyvbjerg (2001) calls it – “phronesis”. This concept of phronesis refers to a set of firm and adaptive deliberative and judgmental qualities possessed by professionals, which tends to guide everyday action. According to Romm (2002), if a person is able to give accounts of his practice wisdom for instance in reflections on practice, he displays “discursive accountability”. What is accounted for are the normative and practical considerations that guides his practice. Doing so, he engages in a form of legitimation. This process of displaying discursive accountability will be the focal point in the forthcoming study of legitimation in daily community development practice.
2.7. Conclusion and preview of the proposed research direction

This literature review revealed a predominant focus on the systemic forces that historically seem to compromise the legitimacy of community development as a social transformative practice. Indeed, more recently, these forces have been even more pronounced, and there has been a corresponding increase in the amount of attention paid to this phenomenon in the literature. These highlighted restraints to the theme of professional legitimacy within the community development literature have been explained by considering the field’s historical roots in political activism and social reform (Sennett, 2012; Shaw, 2010). The promotion of self-determination by the community might not match well with a professional practice orientation that is concerned with seeking support and recognition from his environment. Such an external focus on the process of gaining legitimacy would suggest that professionals who were uncertain about their place in the community would be operating from their own self-interest agenda as the prime movers in the community. This is clearly not in line with the image of the unselfish professional who is not supposed to set an independent agenda.

This reluctance, or perhaps intellectual resistance, towards the recognition of a professional concern for legitimacy in community development might be understandable. However, this scholarly omission in a focus on the processes through which community development professionals create a mandate provides an opportunity to expand our understanding of professional legitimation in community development. A study that empirically, as well as pragmatically, examines of professional legitimation helps fill this void and should make an important contribution to the community development literature. When a community development professional wants to become engaged with a local group of people, he or she is faced with a challenge to connect, and eventually remain connected to them (Owen & Westoby, 2011). But in sharp contrast to the classical professions, such as medicine and the law, community development has no self-evident legitimacy that would provide it with unproblematic access to community affairs. Therefore, insight into the challenges and practical efforts of community development professionals to develop “rapport” with the people with whom they attempt to engage could enrich the educational content and enhance the process of further professionalization in the community development field.

This focus on the strategic “nuts and bolts” of professional community development practices calls for an examination of how the professional has to make strategic use of the characteristics of the environment, primarily as resources to negotiate his or her mandate. Secondly, this study’s conceptualization of how professionals try to develop legitimacy for their professional actions, operates under the assumption that the professional makes use of qualities such as contextualizing, “deliberation” and discursiveness. These qualities enable community workers to manage their professional mandate amidst the many different interactions with local people and other stakeholders. They are the reflective and communicative attributes that support the creation and management of a professional mandate. This ability to legitimize professional activities over time will be interpreted as “professional legitimation”, a notion derived from Berger and Luckmann (1991). This concept encompasses the efforts of social actors to create commonality on the basis of a “symbolic universe”, consisting of shared cognitive and moral interpretations about reality. Fourthly and lastly, this study assumes that contextual constraints, such as traditional civil society and local governance, but also regular professionalization, as well as specific local development issues, will lead to local variations in community development professionals’ strategies of professional legitimation.
Chapter 3. Conceptual framework

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 explored how the recent community development literature dealt with the issue of the legitimacy of the field. Three research strategies were identified that were recently applied to study the challenges of legitimacy in community development. As was argued, these strategies are incomplete. They leave out an essential element. That is the element of everyday practice. The challenges emerge for community workers at the most concrete level in the daily interactions with local people and other stakeholders.

Consequently, this study will adopt an approach that accounts for the everyday challenges of professional legitimacy in community development. First of all, this study aims to view professional legitimacy as a phenomenon that is partly shaped in and by the contexts of practice. Secondly, it seeks to examine how community development professionals actively manage challenges to their legitimacy - the general strategies and the associated techniques. Thirdly, it will consider legitimation from a comparative perspective by considering if there are first of all generic features in professional legitimation in the studied contexts. Also will be examined how the interplay between the context of practice, active legitimation and the experiences of professional becomes visible in the experiences of community development professionals.

Professional legitimacy is seen as a requirement for professional practice, and legitimation process will be considered as a way of securing this legitimacy. The first perspective will, in line with existing evidence, consider professional legitimacy as something that cannot be separated from the institutional and social characteristics of the context. As a result, professional legitimacy will be considered as shaped by constraints such as social policy, the local civil society, local governance, local developmental needs, and the status of the professional. So here, the study acknowledges the value of the existing institutional explanations, outlined in the previous chapter. At the same time, it will examine how issues of legitimacy emerge in everyday professional practices. The contextual constraints provide both limitations and “tools” for professionals to establish their mandate. Here, the issues of legitimation in specific professional practices will be clarified by inquiring how professionals relate the contextual aspects of their practice as constitutive for their professional mandate.

Illustrative for the contextual nature of much community development work, is that different descriptions exist for professional community development work in all three contexts that were studied. Furthermore, in all three contexts, different notions of professional community development work exist. In Bos en Lommer, community development professionals work under the name of participation and activation employees. In Chelsea, they are community organizers, and in Doornkop they work as informal area leaders, alongside formally trained community development workers. For that reason, from here on, references to individuals engaged in professional community development as a conceptual category will be made by using the term “community development professional”; references to “professional community development work” as an empirical phenomenon will appear as “community work” or “community workers.”

The second perspective in this chapter considers professional legitimacy as an outcome of legitimation practices. The institutional and social characteristics of the context are seen as resources for legitimation management. In other words, and in addition to the existing approaches in community development, the professionals will be studied as actors who are shaping their professional mandate by making use of the characteristics of the context. The community workers tune in to how local residents think and feel. As such, they adapt to how the community members organize their
environment, to what they aspire to achieve in life, and to what they value. But these community workers also make use of financial and other support systems to create a common framework for community development endeavors. In short, legitimation strategies of the community workers are at the core of these processes, and their supporting techniques of adaptation to the local context.

A third perspective deals with the question of whether there are generic aspects, that link the different practices of professional legitimation in the three studied contexts. This demands a comparative perspective. By adopting a comparative field study of different contexts of practice on three different continents, this study contributes to understanding universal and specific features of legitimacy in community development practices.

This chapter will develop a conceptual framework by addressing the following areas. First, a number of basic concepts will be outlined and connected to the different perspectives in this study. Legitimacy and legitimation strategies are two distinct markers for exploration of challenges of the professional mandate in community development practice. This will bring focus. Next, a point will be made for different ways to explain how professional legitimacy works in practice. This will bring clarity. Thirdly, a conceptual framework will be presented that enables a comparison of the three contexts of the case studies. This will bring integration.

3.2. Definitions and taxonomies of legitimacy

Let us suppose one would ask a community worker, “What is your mandate to promote a healthy lifestyle in this neighborhood?” He or she would probably be scared away, uttering, “I wouldn’t know. I did not realize I had a mandate.”

Indeed, there only will be a few instances where community development professionals are aware of their mandate. Possessing a professional mandate, something that gives them a “license to operate,” would be hard to acknowledge. Notions such as “mandate” and “legitimacy” are not common in discussions about practice. But nonetheless, without a mandate, without professional legitimacy, professional practice would in fact be impossible. As Ghere (2011, p. 165) points out, legitimacy enables a social actor to “to be, act and relate.” If someone would fail to acknowledge a physician as real, proper, and trustworthy, that professional would not be able to work as a physician. He would not even be able to engage in a professional relationship. For community workers, the same holds true, and this underlines the forthcoming study. Because if local people do not acknowledge the community worker as a professional, no professional community development relations and practices will be possible.

3.2.1. A first definition of legitimacy

These examples position legitimacy as at least a situation of cognitive acceptance. One social actor understands the role and position of another social actor. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 116), it is crucial for this understanding of one’s role and position that there is a shared “symbolic universe.” This universe is filled with shared or common cognitive interpretations about the world and society at large, and how everyday actions fit in. In other words, legitimacy depends first of all on shared cognitions.

In addition to a shared cognitive interpretation of the professional work, a positive “normative interpretation” (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 79) is also required. This interpretation is based on the belief that the symbolic universe that actors share is not only understandable, but also is good.
Suchman (1995) further elaborates on the role of cognitive and moral interpretations. Reviewing the body of research in legitimacy theory, he reconstructed legitimacy as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Suchmann, 1995, p. 574). Legitimacy refers to a situation, whereby a social actor attributes positive qualities to the actions of himself or somebody else. This positive evaluation is based on a connection to the normative definitions present in the context of the evaluator. Ghere (2011) states that only if actions are seen as appropriate, is a social actor able to be, act and relate. The question is, of course, how can legitimacy be made knowledgeable, and if so, what are the features, situations, or experiences of legitimacy? In other words, the question is what precisely constitutes legitimacy?

### 3.2.2. Constituents of legitimacy

At the core of the constituents of legitimacy are two general assumptions in legitimacy theory. The first assumption is that a social actor needs at least to be seen as either being someone of value or bringing something of value (valuation). The second assumption is that the social actor gains recognition by the environment and that this recognition is persistent over time. Suchmann (1995) elaborated on these two assumptions, and translated them into a taxonomy of constituents of legitimacy. That taxonomy yields four constituents, organized within the dimension of valuation and within the dimension of stability and comprehensibility.

The dimension of valuation, points to a dichotomy between passive and active support by the environment. This dichotomy refers to a tension between “doing business as usual” (passive) and “being in it together” (active). Passive support is a kind of unproblematic, taken-for-granted form of support. Active support, in contrast, is a more affirmative kind of support, one that entails a form of mutual engagement.

As building blocks of professional legitimacy, these two modes of support reflect different degrees of stringency. The community workers, seeking a mandate, will probably have to consider what kind of support they are after. A passive, or taken-for-granted kind of support, is perhaps necessary for being recognized as a professional in the first stages of their relationship with local people. Mutual engagement, on the other hand, is usually something that has to grow and develop, requiring a more long-term engagement.

The dimension of stability and comprehensibility is connected to notions of continuity and credibility. Continuity refers to the persistence of the relationships. How stable is the relationship between the social actor and his environment? Credibility, on the other hand, refers to a situation of “embeddedness” of the professional in the local system of beliefs and practices (Suchmann, 1995, p. 574). Credibility and continuity are said to enable the mobilization of people and resources. In the three case studies, the mobilizing qualities of community development workers will be analyzed by focusing on their balance between gaining recognition for their presence, and fusing in with the local mores (credibility), as well as on their efforts to integrate the actions of the community in their natural environment (continuity).

Although continuity and credibility often enhance each other, they do not have to be present in equal degrees. For instance, alerting people to a local environmental hazard, might add to the credibility of the community worker, but not necessarily guarantee a stable professional mandate over time.
In this study, these 2 x 2 constituents of legitimacy will be applied as sensitizing concepts. They will be used to explore the reflections of community workers on what they see as constitutive for their mandate. It can be expected that the meaning that professionals give to these aspects of legitimacy depends on the way they perceive their own position and their role. Consequently, it is also to be expected that in situations where communities are already active around local issues, community workers will see the establishment of a “business as usual” relationship (passive support) differently. At least, if one compares this form of legitimacy to situations where they still have to attempt to get communities in becoming engaged. Otherwise, the stability or the continuity of the engagement between professional and community might have different connotations across contexts. It is possible, if not probable, that in situations where strong civil society organizations exist, continuity has a different urgency for a professional than in cases where strong civil society organizations are lacking. So, these four concepts will be used as search lights to elicit reflections on ideal situations of legitimacy. The result might be that these reflections and the analysis of these reflections will yield new concepts, “colored” by the local features of practice.

### 3.2.3. Domains of legitimacy

Legitimacy theories (Hybels, 1995; Suchmann, 1995; Tilling, 2004) traditionally focus on how social actors gain social recognition. Central here is the search for social approval by fitting in. But where are these actors fitting in? Within legitimacy theory, traditionally two domains (or levels) of legitimacy are distinguished. They differentiate between an institutional domain and an organizational domain. In the institutional domain, “macro” social activities are situated (such as politics, economy, religion).

On the other hand, the organizational domain refers to places where organizational entities seek approval or avoid sanctioning of groups in society. According to Mathews (1993) organizations seek:

“... to establish congruence between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system in which they are a part. In so far as these two value systems are congruent we can speak of organisational legitimacy. When an actual or potential disparity exists between the two value systems there will exist a threat to organisational legitimacy.”

Drawing on this distinction, the professional legitimacy of community development could be studied in these two domains. Looking at the institutional level, one would consider community development as a more or less institutionalized form of professional practice. Studying institutional legitimacy, professionalization theories explain how professions are able to gain acceptance in society (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001). At the organizational level, professional legitimacy could be seen as a resource of community development organizations. This is a form of institutional legitimacy, which gives the professionals a license to operate at the local level and cooperate with other organizations.

Empirical studies that examine everyday interactions of professionals with community people are scarce at this more operational level of legitimacy. Moreover, the classic legitimacy theories also leave us, conceptually, almost empty-handed. Some scientific support is available for skillful legitimacy management to create support for professional presence in local community matters (Hjörne, Juhila, & Van Nijnatten, 2010b). In addition, there is more than anecdotic evidence that professionals at street-level, usually will see initial efforts to connect with the local residents as met with curiosity at best, and rejection at worst. This is especially the case where people have been systematically “al-
ienated” from the society at large for generations. Sennett (2012) frames reflexes of distrust by fragile communities against “intruders” as a sign of withdrawal (p. 189).

3.2.4. Perspectives of legitimacy

Besides distinctions in constituents and domains, legitimacy theories also distinguish different perspectives of legitimacy. Legitimacy theories differentiate “institutional” from “strategic” (or managerial) perspectives. The institutional perspective is the view from outside (“outside looking in”); the strategic perspective is the perspective of the insider (“inside looking out”). In the literature review (chapter 2), a strategic perspective is being identified as dominating, from the perspective of the scholar, the researcher, and the critical friend.

This study will adopt a strategic or managerial perspective that is from the point of view of the professional. This perspective focuses on how community workers view, evaluate and legitimize their presence and actions. It is legitimacy seen “through the eyes” of the professionals, experienced by the professionals, and managed by the professionals in their daily interactions with community people.

In this section, the definitions and taxonomies of legitimacy theory have been briefly explored. A first positioning for the present study of professional legitimacy in community development emerges. Firstly, this study will identify the building blocks or constituents of legitimacy by drawing on notions of support, credibility and stability. Secondly, the study of professional legitimacy in community development is undertaken at the operational level. How do community development professionals seek the approval of the community in daily interactions? This connects to research on street-level bureaucrats (Evans & Harris, 2004; Hjörne, Juhila, & van Nijnatten, 2010a; Lipsky, 1980). Thirdly, this study will adopt a strategic, or managerial, perspective. This perspective focuses on the experiences of the community workers as they have to manage their professional legitimacy. As a consequence, the question will not only be how community workers seek and develop approval from their environment. Central will also be their own report of their experiences, reflections and actions in that process of legitimation. The advantage of adopting that strategic perspective also gives access to an aspect of professional legitimacy that might otherwise be difficult to grasp, and that is the process of legitimation, and the techniques of the community development professionals to manage challenges to their legitimacy. So far, the “building blocks” of legitimacy have been identified. In what follows, concepts will be explored for analyzing how in community development, professionals create these building blocks of professional legitimacy; how they seek approval; how they are able to fit in. In other words, this study will examine how the process of legitimation works in terms of how community development professionals actively respond to challenges of their professional legitimacy. Adopting the strategic perspective enables this researcher to tap into the active endeavors, into the “management”, of professional legitimacy in everyday practice. This connects to two notions: legitimation, developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1991) and the more active, operational notion of “legitimacy management” (Suchman, 1995; Tilling, 2004).

Both notions refer to the same process that underlines the creation of legitimacy, and that is, the process of gaining approval by the merger of meanings.
3.3. Legitimation as the management of professional legitimacy

A physician’s professional legitimacy has been nurtured by decades of professionalization. Scientific knowledge is highly valued in western societies, based on a lengthy training. Furthermore, the same doctor also has his “paraphernalia,” like the work setting (a clean office with medical tools), that adds to medical legitimacy. The typical abstract language and interested, yet detached attitude, also contributes to the legitimized status of medical practitioners. The Hippocratic Oath assures patients that they will be safe in their physician’s hands. These attributes add to the willingness to cooperate with certain medical procedures. What remains implicit is that this professional legitimacy is created. Knowledge, equipment, language, attitude and rituals are part of an "arsenal of techniques" (Suchman, 1995, 586) in a continuous process of legitimation. These techniques establish the physician’s professional legitimacy.

A similar task presents itself for the community worker who also has to use an arsenal of techniques to establish legitimacy. Similar to the physician, the community development worker will have to gain recognition and cooperation, usually from local people.

One of the first characteristics of legitimation is the subtle and implicit process of merger of meanings. That merging of meanings is necessary to establish a common ground, a shared “symbolic universe.” According to Berger and Luckmann, this symbolic universe:

“... orders and thereby legitimates everyday roles, priorities, and operating procedures by placing them sub specie universi, that is, in the context of the most general frame of reference conceivable. Within the same context even the most trivial transactions of everyday life may come to be imbued with profound significance.” (p. 127)

In other words, the process of legitimation imbues social actions with a meaning that is shared by everyone involved. It links what people do to the ideas they share collectively (“what everybody knows and thinks”). This system of ideas collected in that symbolic universe can infuse even the most basic interactions between people with a great urgency. A nodding of the head by a jury member, or even the handing out of a flyer by a local community development professional can become meaningful when the recipient recognizes the gestures as real and valuable. The meaning attached to the gestures is what creates legitimacy.

Legitimation is a highly implicit operation, one not to be disclosed easily. After all, people will not openly or explicitly admit that they are engaging in legitimating activities. This is at odds with the tacit, tactical and casual nature of gaining legitimacy. Luckily, Berger and Luckmann (1991) give us a clue to where processes of legitimation can be made visible, as they state that:

“The edifice of legitimations is built upon language and uses language as its principal instrumentality. The ‘logic’ is thus attributed to the institutional order, and is part of the socially available stock of knowledge and taken for granted as such.” (p. 82)

According to Berger and Luckmann is language the primary vehicle of legitimation. Language is instrumental to justify what one does. It provides words for both existing and new practices. Through the use of language, social actors are able to knit their practices into the symbolic notions, the values and the knowledge of other social actors that together make the institutional order. In a similar manner, professionals by proxy of language are able to tune their professional practices to what people consider as good, just, useful and logical. Through speech, they make themselves known as a professional. They use specific jargon, but they also talk the talk of the local residents. In that way, they establish relationships with community people and other local parties.
Consequently, language may come to our use, as the medium where processes of legitimation in community development become visible. Furthermore, one can see how these processes vary according to specific incidents that occur in the interactions between the community development professionals and their environment. Indeed, legitimacy theorists consider legitimation as active responses to regularly occurring challenges to legitimacy. For instance, Tilling (2004) identifies four responses here: creation, sustainment, expansion defense, and restoration of legitimacy. These challenges to legitimation also occur in community development practice.

In other words, legitimation refers to what social actors do to manage their legitimacy in the face of challenges to that legitimacy. Central are the social actors’ efforts to restore or defend the symbolic universe they share with their environment. Drawing on different legitimation theorists (Dowling, 1975; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Lindblom, 1994; Romm, 1998, 2002) a number of activities can be seen as legitimacy management efforts:

Conversion: Conversion refers to the efforts of the social actor to change the values, norms and cultures of the environment. These efforts aim to foster adaptation of the environment, so that it starts to fit with the practices and values of the social actors whose legitimacy is at stake. Activities such as education, information and expectation management can initiate that change, as well as the use of emotive symbols;

Deliberation: Deliberation entails the reflective efforts of the social actor to consider adaptation of his actions and goals to the demands of the context. In that deliberation, the social actor tunes his own cognitive and normative evaluations to what is seen as appropriate by the environment;

Discursive accountability: Discursive accountability refers to what a social actor undertakes in order to become identified with legitimate symbols, values or institutions in the environment. The notion of discursive accountability is drawn from Romm’s research (2002) into the legitimation practices in the social sciences. She discovered that researchers developed legitimacy by engaging in “meaningful dialogues” with their environment. It is in these dialogues, Romm argues (2002, p. 99) that “people [...] express their (accountable) involvement in society”. As she explains further,

“... discursive accountability suggests that as we engage with ‘the world’, we acknowledge that we have to take responsibility for the possibility that our own understandings (and ways of expressing and working with our understandings) might affect outcomes (or at least the experience of these) for others. Our understandings cannot be isolated from the (self-fulfilling) impact that they might have” (p. 283).

In this study, discursive accountability refers to the legitimating activities of the community development professionals. More precisely, it depicts the variety of techniques they bring into play in the process of legitimation. The practices of discursive accountability will be reconstructed by drawing on both the conversion efforts of the community professional, as well as on their deliberation activities. This leads to the study of how the community development professional creates a “shared symbolic universe” with the local community by either converting the values of the community or by trying to fit in the community as complementary activities. The primary source for studying these legitimating activities will be the reflections of professionals about how they engage in these activities.

A more elaborate account of these three techniques will follow in § 3.5 as an integrated framework for the study of legitimation is presented. However, in order to position both the focus on the constituents, as well as on the process of legitimation, a number of theoretical considerations need to be addressed. In particular, given the focus on the contextual nature of the constituents of
professional legitimacy, as well as the focus on the time-based reconstruction of processes of legitimation, each requires a specific logic of explanation.

3.4. Theoretical considerations

So far, this chapter has examined professional legitimacy as a crucial requirement for professional practice. Legitimation, or legitimacy management, the second element in this study, concerns the process of handling issues of legitimacy, from its creation to its restoration. As stated previously, legitimation is made up of non-obtrusive, but nonetheless effective, appeals to the interests, morals and knowledge of the environment. It also concerns tuning in and merging with the others’ “symbolic universe.” However, legitimation as part of community development practice is also about changing existing values and practices.

As has also been stated, this study will not only focus on what constitutes professional legitimacy, but also on how community development professionals actively manage their professional legitimacy. This requires a focus on the process in legitimation in community development practice. This adoption of the professional’s perspective aims to understand what constitutes the professional’s sense of professional legitimacy. Questions are: How do community development professionals report about the process of adapting to sudden changes of support in their environment? How do they communicate about their actions? How do they develop a mandate, while not only tuning in, but also trying to establish new ways of thinking and acting at the community level?

A second demarcation made so far, is on the object of this study. This object will be the language that community workers make use of in their daily legitimating activities (discursive accountability), and in their accounts of why and how they act in different situations (deliberation). This is in line with Berger and Luckmann’s (1991) argument. We assume that in their reflections, community workers knit the meaning of their actions into the stories, the opinions, the values and experiences of the local people with whom they are working. That is the operational function of language in legitimation; that is how language works. In addition, language exposes the ability of social actors to account for their actions. Studying language such as that used in reflections of professionals can give insight into how they discursively account for questions such as, “What needs to be done?” “What can be done?” or “Is it worthwhile to do so?”. By asking community development workers questions such as these, they can account for their actions. After all, it is through reflections on such questions that practice wisdom or phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 142) reveals itself. That practice wisdom is said to be filled with professional notions, which guide the process of legitimation. Language shows us the practical deliberation of professionals-in-action.

In the following sections, a conceptual model will be presented that integrates the contextual dimension of legitimacy with the operational dimension. This model clarifies the relationship between the various aspects of the legitimating efforts of community workers. The focus will be on their “discursive accountability” in order to make use of symbols, values, needs and local knowledge. This conceptual model is versatile enough to be applied in the three contexts under study. First of all, it must be applicable in the highly structured settings of a Bos en Lommer Social Neighborhood Team. Secondly, it must be of use to study a responsive for of grass roots organizing in Chelsea. Thirdly, it must be effective for the study of the comprehensive Social Development approach in the Doornkop community center. Furthermore, these contexts differ with regard to local governance, social policy, traditions of civil society, and professionalization, as well as to the local development needs. Therefore, the conceptual framework must also be specific enough to depict universal and
context specific characteristics of legitimation. This versatility of the conceptual framework touches a few fundamental epistemological issues.\(^4\)

First, looking for the constituents of professional legitimacy, in Bos en Lommer, Doornkop and Chelsea, requires a model that identifies the impact of contextual constraints. Professional contexts shape the constituents of professional legitimacy; mutatis mutandis variations the constituents of professional legitimacy have to be explained by the contextual constraints. This logic of explanation is expressed in a variance model. On the other hand, studying the workings of legitimation (or legitimacy management), implies an examination of the operational dimension of professional legitimation. This requires a focus on the processes of obtaining professional legitimacy. Technically, this entails an examination of the generative mechanism underlying different stages of professional legitimacy as it evolves over time. This is applied by using time-based reflections of community workers. In these time-based reflections, professionals reconstruct the way they handled challenges of legitimacy in a sequence of events over time.

In the next section, a framework will be presented that supports the comparison of contexts and the integration of different logics of explanation. This study aims to address the requirement of theoretical parsimony through the use of that framework. In chapter 4, these logics of explanation will be further linked to the presented research strategy. For now, they are introduced as to justify the presentation of the conceptual model. This distinction is drawn from the work of Van de Ven (2007).

**Variance model.** The variance model is a first model of explanation in the study. This model seeks explanation in terms of causality between independent and dependent variables (de Graauw, Bloemraad, & Gleson, 2012). The study is interested in what constitutes, according to the community professional, their mandate to work with communities. These constituents will be understood in relation to the characteristics of the contexts of professional practice. This does not imply that this study will infer causality between the contextual features and the constituents of legitimacy in the contexts studied. The variance model presented here merely marks the contextual features and constituents as sensitizing concepts. The possible impact of the context of practice on the constituents of professional legitimacy will become visible in the analysis of the professionals’ reflections in the three case studies.

As a consequence, the logic of explanation underlying the variance model will also enable comparisons between building blocks of legitimacy as they emerge from the professionals’ reflections in the case studies in Bos en Lommer, Chelsea and Doornkop. Hence, each of these case studies differs on a number of predefined contextual characteristics. See Chapter 4 for a more detailed argument for choosing the different contexts of study. Table 3.1 depicts the logic of explanation followed by the variance model.

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\(^4\) The implications of these epistemological issues for the research methodology will be discussed in chapter 4
Table 3.1. Representation of the variance logic of explanation in this study applied as a conceptual framework to study the contextual dimension of legitimation in community development

**Process model.** A second model of explanation, applied in this study, is a process model. In addition to the assumed formative impact of the context in the variance model, legitimation can also be studied as a form of operational causality. This is the causality of actions in contexts. Studying that operational causality requires a focus on what actors do in different situations, and how these actions eventually evolve over time. First of all, a process model for the study of legitimation practices will consider legitimation as a process that evolves over time. The assumption is held that professionals apply different legitimation strategies, which vary over time, in response to specific incidents. Secondly, (and as will be outlined in more detail in § 3.5), discursive accountability draws on situational judgments of the professionals. These judgments entail evaluations and interpretations. These evaluations and interpretations give meaning, and help the professionals to understand the challenges of professional legitimacy in their situation. The study of legitimation linked to time-based stories and evaluations of the community development professionals, requires a process model of explanation. Here, the time-based reflections are the empirical material. In essence, we see how discursive accountability is at work in reflections of professionals. In other words, reflections of professionals provide the empirical material to derive insight into how they deliberate on challenges to legitimacy as they occur over time.
Conversion

Process of legitimation (‘legitimacy management’)

Figure 3.1 Representation of the process model of explanation. Hereby represent State A and State B situations of professional legitimacy. Deliberation, conversion and discursive accountability are legitimating activities. T0 and T1 depict the time dimension.

In what follows, a model is presented that incorporates and integrates both logics of explanation.

3.5. Towards an integrative conceptual model to explain variance and process in legitimation

In the previous section, an argument has been developed for the necessity of constructing a conceptual framework that integrates contextual explanations and process-based explanations. After all, scientific research is about parsimony. This model must enable the comparison of professional legitimacy as a contextual phenomenon, the legitimation process as an operational endeavor of the community development professional. Consequently, this requires the integration of the variance and process logics. In the first part of this chapter, three key concepts were introduced to mark the study of legitimacy and legitimation:

1. Professional legitimacy, as a situation that enables the community development worker to be, act and relate as a professional. The adoption of the “inside looking out” perspective of the community development professional;
2. Legitimation as the process, underlying legitimacy management in terms of establishment, sustenance, expansion, defense and restoration of a “shared symbolic universe”;
3. Discursive accountability as the mechanism for obtaining legitimacy. This mechanism will be studied drawing on reflections of the professionals’ situational awareness, deliberation and meaningful dialogue with the community.

In the next subsections, these three key “legitimacy” concepts are outlined in detail and integrated in a framework for comparison by drawing on the Capabilities Approach (CA) (Alkire, 2003; Sen, 1989; Sen, 2010). The CA is widely acknowledged as a method that highlights human flourishing in general. Furthermore, the Capabilities Approach is also considered to be person-centered, which
makes it suitable as a framework to analyze issues of professional legitimacy from the perspective of the community development professional. Central to the Capabilities Approach is the human capacity to reason (deliberation), to pursue goals (agency) and to make use of available resources in the environment (conversion), which are the key aspects this study considers in community development legitimation processes.

3.5.1. Introducing the Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities Approach (CA) is a Nobel Prize-winning social choice theory, developed by the Indian economist Amartya Sen. In his comparative research during the 1980’s on the welfare of nations, Sen (1988) discovered that the traditional indicators for a nation’s prosperity, such as Gross Domestic Product, did not adequately reflect welfare. He came to define welfare as the basic human need to live a flourishing life. In contrast to the traditional indicators for prosperity, Sen started to develop an alternative set of indicators. Central are notions such as wellbeing and human flourishing. Sen claims that freedom is essential for the wellbeing and flourishing of humans. More precisely, wellbeing is the result of the freedom to choose the life one has reason to value (Sen, 2010).

He labels this freedom to choose the life that one wants to live as a “positive” or “substantial” freedom as set against the traditional liberal notion of “negative” freedom (see also Berlin, 1958, who distinguished the two freedoms, Sen draws upon). Negative freedom is the freedom from interference by others. This freedom is necessary to secure. For instance, it prevents others from determining the choices about political affiliation, religious convictions, or even the place one wants to spend his or her holidays. However, positive freedom is substantial, since it is not set against the possibility of intrusion by others. On the contrary, it is a facilitating freedom. It is expressed by the ability to formulate the terms and conditions for one’s own life to be experienced as valuable.

This ability to define what is valuable for one’s own life, also called a capability, is one of the core tenets of the Capabilities Approach. Legitimation in the context of this study is defined as de facto an exercise in positive freedom. After all, legitimacy means being able to realize one’s goals.

Besides positive freedom, a second requirement for human wellbeing is agency, or the ability to realize what one finds important in life. Sen assumes that positive freedom and agency are foundational for human capabilities. Sen further considers this valuable life as a combination of “beings or doings” that are states or activities that someone has reason to value. These beings and doings are expressed in a person’s “functionings.” Capabilities are, technically speaking, the mediating mechanism between a person’s possibilities to live a valued life and his functionings. These possibilities are present in their most elementary form as commodities in a specific context. For instance, a father is able to value his life as a parent (functioning) when he has had the free choice to become a father (positive freedom). But this functioning as a father also requires access to knowledge and other resources (commodities) to develop his parenting skills. In addition, he needs to be able to provide an income to feed, educate and protect his children from diseases.

With this emphasis on positive freedom as a foundation for the evaluation of human wellbeing, the CA gradually developed into an alternative for the liberal economic theories. Sen came to juxtapose these theories that stress the accumulation of wealth as a fundamental human drive with a focus on human agency (Orton, 2011). Currently, the CA is being used as a conceptual and evaluative framework (Alkire, 2003; Robeyns, 2005) in a broad spectrum of disciplines. Research covers subjects in economy (Anand et al., 2009), ethics (Charusheela, 2008), social sciences (Van Wel, Knijn, Abma & Peeters-Bijlsma 2012), international development (Pyles & Banerjee, 2010), social policy (Carpenter,
2010), gender inequality (Robeyns, 2006), poverty (Alkire, 2008; Clark, 2008; Orton, 2011) and more recently, social work and community development (Lewis, 2012).

Over the past several decades, due to its theoretical “under-specification” (Robeyns, 2006), the CA has evolved in multiple directions, each with different applications. It ranges from policy evaluation to the analysis of personal capabilities in the ICECAP-A (Coast et al., 2008). It has been praised for its ability to integrate the diversity of contexts in which people live, as well as for its normative foundation in human freedom (Nussbaum, 1993; Robeyns, 2006).

3.5.2. Core concepts of the Capabilities Approach and its application in this study

Despite the CA's wide and diverse application as an evaluative framework, a few core concepts are put central, some of which are applied in this study’s conceptual framework (Robeyns, 2006) of legitimation. This framework is used in the comparison of professional legitimation in community development work in Chelsea, Bos en Lommer and Doornkop (see Section 3.5.3). The following basic concepts of the CA function in this study as sensitizing concepts:

1. **Commodities**, as the basic goods, or raw materials, available in a given social setting;
2. **Conversion factors** as tools to transform commodities into useful material;
3. **Capabilities**, or the freedom to choose a life one desires (also sometimes referred to as “substantial freedoms”);
4. **Agency**, or the ability to realize the life one wants to live; and
5. **Functionings**, or what someone “is” and “does” in his life that is valuable to him (also sometimes referred to as “Instrumental freedoms”).

The following assumption of this study concerning legitimation is fundamental to the introduction of these core CA concepts. Legitimation is considered as working through the mechanism of discursive accountability. In this manner, the community development professionals convert commodities into agency by making use of his deliberative qualities. This agency is reflected in discursive accountability. After all, it is discursive accountability that eventually enables the community development professionals to engage in the professional activities they find valuable.

This proposition connects the five most basic elements of the Capabilities Approach (commodities, conversion factors, capabilities, agency and functioning) with professional legitimation. For instance, the legitimation process of community workers might be studied in terms of the CA as follows: Being aware of the needs of local youngsters as opportunities to get them engaged locally (professional capabilities); next deliberatively converting available funding (commodities) for summer activities into possibilities to connect as a professional (conversion factors) with the local youth; and then translating leisure time activities into local engagement (discursive accountability as professional agency).

What follows is a description of the core concepts and their meaning as sensitizing concepts for the study and analysis of legitimation in the three case studies:

1. **Commodities**: Commodities are “goods,” basic materials people can make use of to pursue their goals in life. Commodities can be material resources, as well as physical and financial goods and other forms of income. Structural goods include democracy, and policies with regard to education, health, and social welfare. The selection of the three contexts for this study, has been guided by considering four general types of commodities. These selection criteria are not exclusive, and are assumed to provide community development practices with distinct characteristics.
The first type of commodities this study considers are the local development goods, or the lack thereof. The absence of such goods creates possible incentives for community engagement. In the broadest sense, these local issues can range from basic goods such as food, health, safety, poverty relief, and education, to more elaborate goods such as voicing local concerns, or participating in community services.

A second type of commodities is built up from features of local governance and civil society. Local governance refers to a formal arrangement of councils, aldermen and civil servants. Civil society refers to a set of informal practices that structure community life at the local level. Examples of civil society organizations are children’s clubs, local environmental activists, women’s self-help groups, and neighborhood committees. These complement, and sometimes challenge, local politics. Civil society practices provide communities with resources, pathways, and codes for local engagement. As such, these are commodities for community development practices.

A third type of commodities entail social policy. Social policy refers to the formal and structural provision of social support. In general, social policies define and allocate funds for income support and social services, such as social work for families, individual guidance, and community development. The range of the provision of social support differs from country to country. For community development organizations, the structure and range of social policies in a given context is setting the agenda. It defines whether the organization will work with public funding, private funding or a mix of both. Social policy has an impact on the institutional professional legitimacy of community development practices. It provides means (such as funds) and mandates (assignments) for the community workers. Social policy constraints can also challenge their legitimacy, especially in relationships with the local community. This might be the case when political, financial, strategic, or ideological concerns of the funders do not automatically align with the concerns of the community.

A fourth type of commodities is made up of local characteristics of professionalization. This depicts the resources community development professionals have at their disposal for the establishment of institutional professional legitimacy. For instance, this entails having a distinct professional entity, but also the development and maintenance of specific knowledge and skills. These commodities can be located within a formal system of professional education and training. Recognized expertise, the strength of professional organizations such as labor unions, formal and informal practices of training and supervision also are indicators of professionalization.

2. Conversion factors: Similar to commodities, conversion factors are related to the contexts in which people live. But in contrast to the somewhat unspecified character of commodities, conversion factors reflect a form of accommodation to the context. In fact, conversion factors determine the value of the commodities and the way these can be converted into opportunities. Here, the value of the commodities for the individual is determined. For that purpose, the Capabilities Approach (Robeyns, 2005) identifies internal (personal) and external (social) conversion factors. These means enable the translation of commodities into capabilities. Personal factors could be age and sex, but also cognitive and physical abilities. External conversion factors include different level-factors such as ethnicity, social cohesion and gender equality. Lack of conversion factors can be attributed to an environment deprived of material, legal, social, intellectual and spiritual commodities. Additionally, internalized barriers, referred to as “adaptive preferences” can prevent a person, as individual or as a professional, to successfully make use of commodities in his environment.

In this study, conversion factors determine the professional’s ability to build professional legitimacy. It is professional capital, derived from the environment. In fact, this study sees these conversion factors as one of the key concepts necessary to study how legitimation processes work in the three case studies. In order to be able to discern conversion factors, this research will draw on the
taxonomy of Suchmann (1995) as different sources of legitimacy: (1) pragmatic legitimacy; (2) moral or normative legitimacy; and (3) cognitive legitimacy. This taxonomy delivers the sensitizing concepts to study and analyze legitimation in community development.

*Pragmatic conversion* factors are legitimacy resources that make an appeal to the “self-interested calculations” of the environment (Suchmann, 1995, p. 578). They can be visible in direct exchanges, granting influence, and the disposition of the actors and his actions. Pragmatic conversion factors involve direct exchanges with the environment, and convert “audiences into constituencies.” This can affect their wellbeing directly and concretely. For instance, organizers can use incentives, such as free meals (exchange), a certain reputation of the organization (disposition), or dialogues (influence) in order to get and keep people involved in community activities.

*Moral conversion* factors are rooted in a “positive normative evaluation” (Suchmann, 1995, p 579) by the environment. This reflects the provocation of a sense of “justness” or appropriateness of the actor and his actions. By making appeals, but also by applying “the right” techniques or methods, the “right” design of structures, and “due” procedures that community workers can utilize to transform contextual characteristics into “legitimating capital.” In the moral sphere, the notion of creating or sharing a common “symbolic universe” becomes tangible. Ideally, in order to be seen as just or appropriate, community workers will attempt to adapt to local practices (techniques), look for familiar spaces to organize meetings (structures), and show respect for existing cultural practices with regard to gender, age, and class when making contact with local people (procedures).

Finally, *cognitive conversion factors* are rooted in the ability of the actor to make actions either knowledgeable or just to let them be “taken for granted.” These conversion factors reflect the potential of the professional to arrange experiences into “coherent, understandable accounts” (Suchmann, 1995, p.582). Conversion factors can be made up by appropriate cultural models “that furnish plausible explanations for […] actions”. They mesh larger belief systems or symbolic universes “with the experienced reality of the audience’s daily life” (p. 582). For instance, the application of educational activities, such as lectures and debates, might be seen as a cognitive conversion factor. As such, it would link community needs to deal with the challenges of life with the professional mission to empower communities. Facilitating knowledge development is here supportive, as it helps communities to take charge of issues that affect their lives (Staples and Gradener, 2012)

The hitherto mentioned pragmatic, moral and cognitive conversion factors can be seen as critical resources for the community worker. Professional legitimation is herein being reflected in a professional’s ability to translate what people know and value into legitimizing assets. This study will lean heavily on the premise that this ability to translate or converse, extensively determines the sense of legitimacy in community development.

3. Capabilities: Capabilities, one of the core concepts of the CA, reflect genuine opportunities a person has at his or her disposal to live a valuable life. Capabilities are what people are free to do (Sen, 1989). According to Sen, these capabilities entail the context a person lives in. On the other hand, Nussbaum proposes a universal, fixed list of universal capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011). In general, the concept of capabilities (sometimes also referred to as “substantial freedoms”) include mental states (Coast et al., 2008), moral abilities (Robeyns, 2005), public reasoning practices (Sen, 2005), and sociability (Lewis, 2014).

Here, we can see that capabilities have an external and an internal focus. The acknowledgement of the impact of the environment as facilitator of someone’s substantial freedom clearly entails an external focus, while the CA’s internal emphasis can be seen in the identification of reasoning abilities as a constituent of capabilities. Legitimation is reflected in the freedom of the community development worker to choose how to be, act and relate as a professional. Freedom is also the ability
to deliberate as a form of professional reasoning and judgment. Consequently, deliberation is an expression of a professional’s “capabilities.” This is guided by theorizing about how professionals act and think. Foundational for that connection are notions that emphasize the intrinsic relation between professional practice and deliberation. Most prominent here are notions of reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983), and “phronesis,” or professional judgment (Flyvbjerg, 2001). According to Schön, the professional’s capacity to reflect on the action and to engage in a process of continuous learning fundamental to professional practice. This process of continuous “reflective” learning is made up of two key features (Peake et al., 2006): (1) the simultaneous occurrence of theorizing, thinking, and action and (2) problem solving that draws on experience through an analogical, nonlinear process (p. 567). In other words, the ability to function as a professional is rooted in reasoning. Reasoning, an expression of one’s reflective ability, enables problem solving and improves these skills – and that is what makes professional reasoning and reflection a capability in the context of professional practice.

Reflections form the basis of how professionals assess challenging situations (“fuzzy problems”), based on observations (“do I know the population?”), and practice principles (“what is in general the best response”). However, moral considerations also arise (“what is appropriate, as they consider me...”). This moral consideration is what Flyvbjerg (2001) calls “phronesis,” or practice wisdom in action; Flyvbjerg highlights the moral or ethical component of professional reflection. Experience is responsible for the shaping of practice wisdom, but experience also informs moral knowing. According to Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 57) values are evaluated in professional reflection, “Things that are good or bad for man – as a point of departure for action.” This makes reflection more than a purely intellectual activity; it makes it moral, a value-based deliberation. Central in these reflection-on-action, or value-based deliberations are the following features:

The deliberation concerns the relationship between the “particular” and the “general.” This concerns the situation as it presents itself and the circumstances of the event or tasks on one side. Theories, values, and ethical frameworks are on the other side. This deliberation is part of the learning experiences of the professional (Breier & Ralphy, 2009).

Individuals manage the relationship between the particular and the general in a flexible manner. For instance, the practical wisdom that enables the community worker to deal with unexpected visitors during a neighborhood meeting can be understood as coming from a certain “feel” for the situation. This is neither the logic of the theory nor the logic of methodology. For example, theory might well have informed the professional that the formal character of the neighborhood meeting would legally prohibit a change of the agenda and so would the traditional techniques for conducting a disruptive meeting. The rules that guide these value judgments cannot be prescribed in advance, rather they are the result of an embodied expertise gained through experience. “A horizontal discourse entails a set of strategies which are local, segmentally organized, context specific and dependent, for maximizing encounters with persons and habitat” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 157).

The ability to make situational value-judgments is a guide for action. According to Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 145), three value-rational questions are important for making value judgments: (1) Where are we going?; (2) Is it desirable?; and (3) What should be done? When exploring these questions, the considerations that arise as a result do not find their legitimacy in general, universal values nor in moral relativism (“anything goes”). Instead, they take into account the “the socially and historically conditioned context, and not the universal grounding that is desired by some scholars but not yet achieved” (Flyvbjerg, 2001 p. 291).
Consideration should be given to whether particular actions contribute to the good of the wider community. In this sense, phronesis is the expression of an intellectual virtue. It demonstrates a person’s awareness of the consequences of one’s own deeds for the well-being of others, as expressed in a “sensus communis” (common sense) of what is good for the community.

A congruence must be established between a professional’s individual interests, values, meanings, convictions and ideology, as well as the interests, values, meanings and ideologies of his constituency and other stakeholders in development processes. According to Bernstein, this relates to the issue of power, which was introduced with the emergence of modern social sciences, “No conception of phronesis can be adequate today unless it confronts the analysis of power” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 88).

In sum, capabilities are generally defined as an expression of a professional opportunity to act according to what one values. In this study, this opportunity to act according to one’s values has been translated into a professional deliberative capability, which is foundational for professional practice. Here, deliberation is a form of value judgment, one that considers concrete actions in relation to general ideas in a flexible, adaptive manner as situations unfold.

Furthermore, professional deliberation is an expression of a professional’s ability to make “value-rational” judgments, based on an assessment of the interests of the wider community. These value judgments create congruence between the values of the professional and the value judgments of the environment.

4. Agency: Agency refers to a person’s ability to pursue important goals in life (Sen, 1989). Agency is said to be manifest in abilities such as planning and conducting what is needed to create a valuable life. In other words, agency refers to a person’s ability to actually realize the life one values. It is closely connected to planning, conducting and self-regulating necessary actions to reach valued “beings and doings.” Within the context of this study, the concept of agency is especially relevant as a conceptual marker for the sense of operational “efficacy” in terms of discursive accountability. After all, legitimacy is a result of the ability of the professional to “balance’ or calibrate through language the norms, values and other professional considerations with those of the community in question.

According to Sen (1989), agency is closely related to public reasoning. Similarly, in essence, the ability of the community development professional to make considerations subject to public reasoning marks professional efficacy, as well as the ability to develop professional legitimacy. Hence, it is reflected in the core of “dialogical” community development. Here collective, individual and professional assumptions are made discursive with regard to the world people live in and the way social relationships are being built. In this process of evaluation, professionals aim to expand the capabilities of communities through education, reflecting on new perspectives and modes of action, thus strengthening the community’s agency.

Drawing from the previously mentioned work of Romm (2002) on the role of social discourse in legitimating practices, this study considers discursive accountability as the professional’s ability to account for the way he sees and understands the world, not just reflectively (such as in deliberation), but also communicatively. However, that understanding is neither neutral nor free of consequences. The worldview, and the way it is being expressed, might have an impact on the lives of people around us. According to Romm, language is the instrument of discursive accountability. It is normative, and it shapes realities. Especially for professionals in the field of community development, it is imperative that they are aware of the way language can impact people’s lives. In daily community development practice, it is exactly the trick of the trade. One has to respect the way local community members talk, act and think, so that they, in turn, will respect the professionals. That is the way pro-
professionals create active support for presence and credibility. At the same time, they are required to engage local people so that they can change the status quo of the lives they live. That not only requires active support, but also persistence of their presence.

5. Functionings: Functionings represent what people are able to perform, in terms of valued, or important beings and doings (Sen, 1999) in life. Sen also refers to them as “instrumental freedoms. These can take their shape in activities, physical states, mental situations, or social functioning’s (Lozano, Boni, Perris and Hueso, 2012). Functionings are a result of the translation of substantial freedoms (capabilities) into instrumental freedoms (the ability to be and do). According to the Capabilities Approach, a person’s functionings can be measured by the degree to which one is living a life that one has reason to value. Functionings are seen as a combination of interrelated activities, or combined states of “beings and doings,” which give an individual a sense of living a valued life. Translated to the professional domain, more specifically that of community development practice, professional “functionings” are expressed as the constituents of professional legitimacy: active and/or passive support, and credibility and/or continuity. In terms of the Capabilities Approach, professional legitimacy is how these four building blocks of legitimacy form “an achievement set: the range of the feasible options within which a particular functioning vector has been realized.” (source)

3.5.3. Using the Capabilities Approach as an integrated approach to compare professional legitimation

Since the CA’s increasing popularity among scholars over the last several decades, it has proven to possess a considerable versatility. Due to its conceptual under-specification, its core concepts can easily be adapted into different models for evaluation and assessment. The reason for that versatility is that the Capabilities Approach is not a theory, but rather a normative “approach” to “conceptualize and evaluate” (Robeyns, 2005, p. 353). Since it is characterized by under-specification, it can be applied in a great variety of ways. The CA can incorporate different theoretical, practical, normative or epistemological concerns. This under-specification allows the connection of this broad framework to additional theoretical assumptions. First of all, legitimation runs along the same lines as the CA defines “acting according to what one has reason to value.” Legitimation is a process of conversion of contextual resources, of deliberation on one’s goals and opportunities, and displaying a form of discursive accountability. In essence, the application of the Capabilities Approach adds a second layer of analysis and comparison, focusing on the community development professional wondering, “Why do I do what I do” (Crocker and Robeyns, 2002, p. 73).

As argued earlier, first, there is a logic underpinning the variance model. This logic concerns the evaluation of the relationship between contexts and outcomes (see fig. 3.2 below). We assume that due to the variation in the context of the case studies, each will elicit different outcomes in terms of what, according to the community development professionals, constitutes professional legitimacy. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the theoretical sampling of the three cases on the basis of maximum variety (civil society and governance, social policy, traditions of professionalization and local development issues), is assumed to produce different configurations of professional legitimacy (legitimate professional functionings). In a classic variance model of explanation, the mechanism of legitimation remains a “black box.” Indeed, it would explain the differences in “outcomes” - in this case, the difference in the constituents of professional legitimacy in Chelsea, Bos en Lommer, and Doornkop. However, in that explanation, these differences in legitimacy would uniquely be attributed to the different contextual constraints in the cases under study.
By taking the mediating role of legitimation into consideration, this black box can be opened. Indeed, this means incorporating a focus on legitimation as a process of active mediation between the intentions of community development professionals and those of the community. As a consequence, legitimacy can be a result of active endeavors of social actors - in this case, community workers and community members. In addition to the impact of the contextual constraints, insight can also be developed into legitimation within the constraints of that context. This entails a focus on the techniques community development professionals apply in the management of their legitimacy. Questions can be dealt with such as: How do the community development professionals apply conversion factors? How do they deliberate on the relationship between the situation and the values, interests and knowledge of themselves, as well as those of the community? Here, discursive accountability-in-practice can be discovered.

In order to pursue this line of inquiry, specific incidents, and more precisely, the reflections of professionals on these incidents, will be studied. In these reflections, what will be explained is how the process of converting contextual resources, deliberation, and discursive accountability leads to a form or a situation of professional legitimacy. The following diagram depicts the approach for the analysis of actions that community development professionals engage in to manage issues of professional legitimacy. The “black box” of legitimation in the variance model will be opened through the process model of explanation.
Figure 3.3. Model describing the framework to analyze the process of professional legitimation. Central here are the reflections of community development professionals on managing incidents of challenged legitimacy by adaptation, deliberation and discursive accountability to obtain as a results specific states of professional legitimacy.

The question is how to integrate these two models. The logic of explanation that forms the basis of the Capabilities Approach turns out to be of great assistance in integrating a variance model and a process model of explanation. The following figure represents that analytical framework. It integrates the two models of explanation. The first “layer” of explanation (variance model) is made up by the references community workers make to the four contextual constraints on professional legitimacy. The second “layer” of explanation (process model) depicts the mechanism of legitimation, in terms of distinct activities applied by the community development professional. How this integrative model, as provided by the Capabilities Approach, will be applied as a research and analytical strategy, will be outlined in the following chapter.

Fig. 3.4 The Capabilities Approach, a general framework, integrating the contextual and operational dimension of professional legitimation.
3.6. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the central conceptual framework for this study. First, this conceptual framework has been informed by legitimacy theory; more specifically the theoretical tradition stressing the strategic nature of legitimacy has been presented. In this tradition, social actors are pushed to approach the environment instrumentally in order to organize social support for their presence and activities (Dowling & Pfeiffer, 1975). This “inside looking out” perspective on legitimacy calibrates well with the ambition of this study to inquire into the conscious and unconscious legitimation strategies of community development professionals. Furthermore, this strategic perspective also grounds the professional in his environment, in this case, as an actor in local community concerns, aiming to create a professional mandate on the basis of a strategic negotiation between his or her “norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchmann, 1995, p. 574) and those of the local community stakeholders. The strategic skillfulness is said to be found in the ability to transform contextual constraints into legitimizing resources. These resources are either of a pragmatic, moral or cognitive nature. As professionals, they “stretch” the boundaries of the symbolic universe of the local people by introducing new modes of thinking and acting.

Legitimacy theory has traditionally been regarded as a systems theory, treating social order as a result of the coordination between different social actors. Therefore, there was a need to conceptually bridge a gap in this framework that exists between this abstract system-based character of legitimacy theory and the reality of everyday interactions of the community worker. That is why the conceptual framework adopted notions of professional deliberation and agency, which were developed by scholars such as Schöns (1983), Flyvbjerg (2001), and Romm (2002). It introduces professional attributes, such as “reflection in and on action,” the use of practice wisdom, and communicative, discursive action. Analytically, this further anchors the community worker in the context of everyday practice. It is in everyday interactions with local people that these community development professionals have to face a great diversity of implicit and explicit challenges to professional legitimacy.

This study follows a dual approach. First of all, there is a variance-based approach. Here, the contextual dimension of professional legitimation will be studied. This entails an examination of the constituents or ingredients of professional legitimacy. Empirically, the references will be analyzed community workers make to specific local characteristics such as local traditions of civil society and governance, social policy structures, local development needs, and specific practices of professionalization. The aim of this line of inquiry is to root the experiences of professional legitimacy in a specific context of practice. By eventually comparing the different cases, common themes and context-specific aspects of legitimacy can be identified. Secondly, a process-model of explanation should focus on the operational dimension of legitimation. Here, legitimation as a process is studied. Here, the aim is to explain legitimation as it occurs in the time-based reflections of the community development professionals.

Finally, an integrative framework, drawn from the Capabilities Approach was presented. The CA, originally a social choice theory, has been advanced as a means to be able to provide concepts for empirical accounts, such as the field studies. However, it also holds the elements for an ideal theory in the form of a conceptual framework (Robeyns, 2005, p. 356). This leads to this proposal to study professional legitimacy by examining:

1. Experiences of professional legitimacy, as constitutive for the sense of legitimacy of community workers in terms of professional functionings;
2. These experiences are enabled by legitimation rooted in deliberation (capabilities), conversion of contextual constraints (commodities) as legitimating resources, and the application of discursive accountability (agency).

In this manner, this study will also look at generic features in what constitute the professional mandates in the different practices. For instance, the question can be addressed, “If local community members exhibit passive support for launching a community initiative, will there be different connotations for government funded professionals than for privately funded organizers?” Furthermore, it could clarify whether the strategies of the latter to create, maintain and eventually defend or restore their professional mandate, differ in the way they make appeals to the values, interests and cognitions of the local community.

As a result, this conceptual and analytic framework, drawing from legitimacy theory, professional reflectivity, and the Capabilities Approach, enables the general research question to be translated into more specific sub-questions. First of all, these questions need to cover a cross-contextual approach, considering professional legitimacy as something that arises from specific forms in different contexts of practice. Furthermore, the sub-questions also should include an examination of legitimation as a process that evolves over time, discursively and deliberatively “managed” by professionals. Finally, the sub-questions should also leave room for the detection of, not only context specific features, but also, potentially common characteristics of legitimation. Below, these requirements are translated through the following sub-questions:

According to the experiences of community development professionals in the different studied contexts, what are the constituents of their professional legitimacy? (What are their associations with active and passive support, with credibility and continuity?)

What are the legitimation strategies in the different contexts under study? More precisely, how do the community development professionals translate contextual constraints, phrased in terms of pragmatic, moral and cognitive contextual resources into resources for discursive accountability? What techniques of discursive accountability enable community development professionals to establish, maintain, defend and eventually restore, professional legitimacy?

What are possible generic features, commonalities and differences in the contexts under study with regard to the constituents of professional legitimacy of community development professionals, and in the applied legitimation strategies? And consequently, how do contextual features, provided by social policy constraints, professionalization practices, local development needs and traditions of civil society and governance, help to explain the constituents for professional legitimacy and the legitimation strategies of community development professionals?

These three research questions will be answered by analyzing how community workers in the three different contexts of practice (Bos en Lommer, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Chelsea, MA, USA; and Doornkop, Johannesburg, South Africa) manage issues of professional legitimacy. Before presenting the empirical accounts, a well-deliberated research methodology is required. Therefore, in the following chapter, the ontological and epistemological foundations for the study will be outlined. Central will be the question, “How can legitimation be studied from a comparative perspective, so that possible universal and specific context-bound ingredients of professional legitimacy can be identified?” Furthermore, “What are the strategies to be applied in the field studies, as well as in the analysis of the field data?” Chapter 4 will address these issues.
Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the philosophy underlying the research, as well as to account for the research approach of this study. In this chapter, the rationales for both the selection of the cases under study and the procedures that have been guiding the data collection and data analysis also will be outlined. Furthermore, the scope and limitations of the research design will be discussed.

This study will examine the contextual, operational and generic dimensions of professional legitimation in three community development practices. Central will be the perspective, the experiences, and the reflections of the professional about his legitimacy, engaging with local community people. This approach is founded in an assessment of the recent relevant community development literature, outlined in Chapter 2. This led to the formulation of a knowledge gap: First of all, are concerns about legitimacy primarily discussed against an historical, political and ideological framework. Central was the interplay between professional practice and its sociopolitical constraints. These accounts in the review of the scholarly literature appear to aim at a restoration of the institutional legitimacy of community development as a social-transformative practice.

However, what the reviewed articles tend to overlook are the everyday, tactical practicalities. How do community development professionals create a professional mandate in communities? Secondly, a comprehensive theoretical framework on legitimacy as a requirement for practice is lacking. Such a framework has been developed in chapter 3. It offers conceptual tools to analyze professional legitimacy as indebted to supportive characteristics of the context community development professionals work in. It also offers the sensitizing concepts to study how community development professionals obtain professional legitimacy. How do they create, maintain, expand, defend and restore a professional mandate? Thirdly, chapter 2 signaled that a systematic comparative perspective about how other contextual constraints than just the political ones impact the experience of professional legitimacy in practice is lacking. For instance, factors such as professionalization practices, and local development needs have largely been ignored. In reaction to that omission, chapter 3 outlines different concepts and taxonomies provided by legitimacy theory. As a consequence, this study came to distinguish professional legitimacy from legitimation; the first representing a condition necessary to be able to work as a professional, the second as a process professionals engage in to develop, sustain and sometimes restore their legitimacy as a professional.

Legitimacy can be seen as an outcome, a result that can be understood by looking at the characteristics of the context. Legitimation as a process is built up by legitimating activities of the community development professional. Deliberative activities, the use of contextual resources, and discursive accountability are foundational for that process of legitimation. The identification of the knowledge gap in Chapter 2, and the classification and conceptualization of legitimacy and legitimation in chapter 3, yielded the following general research questions:

7. What are the constituents of professional legitimacy, and the strategies of legitimation of community development professionals?
8. What are possibly generic and context-specific features of professional legitimation in community development?
In order to answer these questions, this study is set up as a comparative multiple case study with embedded units of analysis in three different contexts of practice. The study is conducted on the basis of a well-deliberated choice for studying three cases; in Chelsea (USA), Bos en Lommer (NL) and Doornkop (SA) between May 2012 and April 2014. Each case was selected on the basis of variance in respective professional culture and socio-political characteristics, as well as on accessibility for a qualitative study for a three-month period. The case studies each included preparatory desk research, followed by a three-month period of participant observation, individual topic and group interviewing. During the presence in the field a simultaneous study took place of incidents of legitimacy management as “embedded units” in the cases.

The researcher adopted a “critical realist” perspective for the study of legitimation in community development. This meant that the assumption was held that there is a real world outside that we can know, but that our current knowledge of that world is fallible. According to the critical realists, the evolution of knowledge proceeds through scrutinizing and consequently refining the concepts we use to understand the phenomena under study. In critical realists’ terms, these social phenomena are knowable by identifying the mechanisms that produce them – the so called “generative mechanisms.”

In order to gradually develop understanding of the generative mechanisms by grasping the issues and processes of professional legitimation in community development in context, this research has consequentially been set up as a comparative multiple case study. Understanding issues of professional legitimation in the context of everyday community development practice requires an approach that recognizes professional practices as unique and situated, becoming manifest in the local practices of community development. At the same time, this research strives to understand how contextual factors can be seen as determinants, or structuring factors, for professional legitimation in community development.

The research strategy and design was set up accordingly, combining an ethnographical approach, immersing in daily practices, and additionally studying “critical incidents” in professional legitimation management. Participant observation, interviews, and other data sources together provided a rich mix of information for developing a process model to describe processes of professional legitimation in community development.

4.2. Research philosophy

The research philosophy in this study has been inspired by critical realism, a sociology of knowledge tradition assuming that there is a reality outside of us that can be made knowable. Built on this ontological assumption, is an epistemology asserting that phenomena are knowable by tracing interdependent and underlying “generative” mechanisms. Critical realist philosophy hereby propagates a knowledge development strategy that at least encompasses the use of observations – which is the predominant strategy of classical empiricism. In the view of critical realism, knowledge cannot ultimately be grounded in imagined or imaginary ideas or concepts. On the contrary, understanding reality is, according to the critical realists, work in progress. On the one hand, that progress moves beyond the empirical observations as an end result of a classic empiricist, while on the other hand, it is advanced by scrutinizing the imagined ideas as models of reality of the classical idealist:

“(I)It is the task of science to discover which hypothetical or imagined mechanisms are not imaginary but real; or, to put it the other way round, to discover what the real mechanisms are, i.e. to produce an adequate account of them” (Bhaskar, 2008, p 136).
In short, critical realism distinguishes itself from the empiricism as propagated by the positivist research tradition that sees reality as given, as a conjunction of cause-and-effect chains. On the contrary, the critical realists consider causality, as a more complex, multi-contingent mechanism. In this view, causality is a transcendent, universal process underlying the social phenomena under study, conceptualized in the form of “generative mechanisms.” In order to trace these generative mechanisms, Bhaskar (2008, p. 149) argues that the researcher needs to make inferences about the workings of the social phenomena under investigation. Inferences can be seen here as “constructed” analogies or metaphors, according to Lawson (2009, p. 24). In making these inferences, one is moving from the conceptualizing of a certain phenomenon into the conceptualization “of some totally different type of thing, mechanism, structure that, at least in part, is responsible for the given phenomenon” (ibid, p. 24). At first, these conceptions of causality may well be the product of imagination, a construction or model of reality as the result of interpretive work (Bhaskar, 2008). But in the end, the researcher must empirically put these postulated generative mechanisms to the test. In order to challenge these postulated generative mechanisms, one has to disrupt reality by manipulating the circumstances, the social structures and other determinants.

By adopting critical realist sociology of knowledge, this study interprets social phenomena of professional legitimation as a result of the interplay of contextual factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1994) and legitimation strategies (“legitimacy management”) adopted by community development professionals. Hereby, legitimation as the generative mechanism is considered a combination of the use of conversion factors, deliberation, and discursive accountability (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed outline of the conceptual framework). Positioning this generative mechanism as a legitimating capability further enabled theorizing a model of professional legitimation. At the same time, this generative mechanism of legitimation enables to empirically grounding the interplay between contextual factors and legitimacy management practices in community development. In this study, professional legitimation has been defined as the ability of community development professionals to both tune into, as well as to challenge, communities’ values, ideology, cultural views and practices. The postulated generative mechanism of legitimation was deliberately studied in different professional contexts. This supported the ambition to grasp both the contextual determinants, as well as the eventual generic features, of professional legitimation in community development practices.

The ideas of Bhaskar and other critical realists, such as the earlier mentioned Lawson (2007) and (Sayer, 1997), have been of considerable influence on social research methodology in general. It also has grounded the use of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods, not the least in economics (Lawson, 2007) and professional practices (See: Mc Evoy & Richards, 2006; Oliver, 2011). Of special interest for this study is one of the most eminent translations of the critical realist philosophy into research methodology called “realist evaluation,” developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997). Realist evaluation is a technique to evaluate social programs and practices. It acknowledges that different social, political and cultural factors affect the outcomes of these programs (Marchal, van Belle, van Olmen, Hoeree, & Kegels, 2012). The workings of professional practices, framed in programs that include personnel, place, history and outlook, can be scientifically understood by studying the institutions, as well as the rules, that guide practice. Outcomes are the result of the interplay between context and mechanism in the framework of scientific realist evaluation. Realist evaluation includes the building and testing of models called Context – Mechanism - Outcome configurations (CMOc) that demonstrate how programs “activate mechanisms amongst whom and in what conditions, to bring about alterations in behavioral or event or state regularities” (Pawson & Tilley, 2004, p. 9). As such, these models enable variation in both mechanism and relevant contexts as predictors and explanations for variation in outcome patterns. A realist evaluation is the result of explanations of how
complex conjectures between contextual features and situated mechanisms lead to outcome configurations. By altering the circumstances in which social phenomena are studied, the generative mechanism can become known (Bhaskar, 2008).

This study is inspired by the realistic evaluation approach, first of all by considering professional legitimacy as the outcome of a complex interaction of between locally developed professional efforts of legitimation and the characteristics of the context. These efforts will be studied in the context of specific traditions of civil society, governance, national and locally implemented social policies. Also, specific local community needs and historically groomed notions of professionalization are seen as contextual relevant.

Secondly, realist evaluation is applied when the researcher adopts an adaptive approach, hereby developing his research activities flexibly with respect to the contextual restraints of the case under study (Rixom, 2011). As a consequence, the shaping role of the organization, the professionals, and the other constituents in community development practices has been included in the design and execution of this field study.

### 4.3. Research approach

This study was set up as comparative, multiple case-study approach with an additional focus on “embedded units.” First, there was the choice for the case-study approach informed by the need to consider the legitimacy practices of community development professionals in a holistic way, since both the context-bound features of legitimacy practices, as well as the generative mechanisms of legitimation, had to be taken into account. Thus, the case-study approach best reflected the ambition to examine the conjectures of contextual features and mechanisms of legitimation. In order to fine-tune the conceptualization of the generative mechanisms underlying legitimacy management strategies, it was also necessary to study them under different circumstances. This necessitated a comparative strategy (Yin, 2002), which enabled the identification of the contextual constraints responsible for the shaping of the generative mechanisms of legitimacy management.

The case studies were approached as time-limited ethnographies, while the focus on embedded units was designed to make clearly delineated inquiries into specific incidents or challenges regarding legitimation. The researcher immersed into the daily practices of community development professionals, a strategy known to facilitate a deep involvement (Schwartman, 1993) with the professionals and their constituents. This has generated “thick descriptions” of culturally situated professional knowledge, actions and strategies. Simultaneously, the researcher also focused on specific events of legitimacy management within the cases under study, thereby making it possible to reconstruct processes of legitimacy management as they were evolving over time (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 154).

In essence, these embedded units were considered to be cases-within-cases (Yin, 2008).

**Nomothetic and idiothographic.** The research process was characterized by a cyclical going back and forth between theory-development and data collecting, thus enabling an adaptive process of fine-tuning of concepts and practice. Thus, this bi-directional process contributed to the internal validity of the conceptual framework, and was required in the initial phase of this study, due to a lack of comprehensive conceptual, theoretical and empirical material on legitimacy management in the field of community development. According to Yin (1994), a combination of knowledge-driven or nomothetic, and case-driven or idiothographic, strategies can be applied as respectively causal and descriptive approaches to case studies. Nomothetic approaches to knowledge development are causal in the sense Yin (2002) defines causal - as looking for cause and effect relationships, and depending
on the state of knowledge, using existing theories for explaining those causations. In this study, the theoretical framework takes legitimacy management as a generative mechanism and regards contextual features as possible enabling, disturbing, shaping, or delineating forces contributing to the challenges of strategic professional legitimacy in situated community development practice.

Idiographic strategies, on the other hand, are descriptive in Yin’s sense, insofar as there is a clearly stated theory to guide the collection and description of the phenomenon under study. Combining nomothetic and idiographic strategies is congruent with the central aim of this study. It enables to enrich community development theory with knowledge that is both embedded in specific professional community development practices while also transcending individual practices.

**Cross-contextual and real-time.** The research adopted a combination of a cross-contextual and a real-time approach to the cases under study. Studying, and consequently comparing, professional legitimation in different professional contexts made it possible to describe the context-bound aspects, as well as the generic aspects. As a consequence, this could add up to a comprehensive account of legitimation in community development practices. It enabled the examination of how contextual constraints were of influence on the challenges, and constituents of professional legitimacy in a variety of professional contexts. Real time descriptions were found in the reconstruction of the “embedded units,” that is, incidents, or recollections of incidents, by professionals during the field research period that represented legitimation processes. Here the contribution by the community development professional to obtain a professional mandate in the community was examined.

**Comparative strategies.** The comparative methodology was considered to be appropriate because it allows the use of heuristic concepts to identify the workings of contextual aspects in the phenomenon under study (Yin, 1994). In other words, by comparing professional legitimacy and legitimation in Chelsea, Doornkop and Amsterdam, the role and impact of the context could be made intelligible. In comparative research, three major strategies can be distinguished (Skocpol & Somers, 1980): parallel demonstration of theory, contrast of context, and macro causal analysis. Parallel demonstration of theory is a technique that juxtaposes possible historical instances to demonstrate the validity of a theory. The cases under study are selected on the basis that they represent subtypes along continua of contextual features, such as traditions of local governance and civil society. Here, the goal of comparison is to demonstrate a kind of similarity in all the cases, and thus the applicability of a certain theory. On the other hand, the contrast of contexts is a technique that aims to demonstrate that social phenomena are distinctive in their kind, and that contextual constraints, and not universal principles or theories, apply. Macro causal analysis is a strategy that aims to develop new explanations for social phenomena, or tries to change the scope of existing explanations.

From a critical realist perspective, the use of all three of the modes of comparison could be defendable, provided that claims of causality or causation would be treated with caution, and the interpretive, reconstructive character of comparative work would be acknowledged. For instance, Gorsky (2009) warns about relying too heavily on mechanistic, as well as nomothetic, models of explanations in comparative studies. He proposes treating causality within the critical realist framework as “emergent causal powers or related entities within a system” (p. 189).

With this warning not to treat causality too mechanistic, this study will combine different comparative strategies: First, the contrast of contexts aimed to explore the description of the workings of contextual constraints on legitimation practices in professional community development. This is done by reviewing professional legitimation in different situations and contexts. Additionally, it also makes use of the parallel demonstration of theory strategy. This aimed to describe how the generative mechanism of legitimation can function as a model for describing professional legitimation strategies in a well-chosen diversity of professional community development practices. In both com-
parative strategies, the causality of context-bound mechanisms, as well as the universality of the generative mechanism of legitimation, will be treated as provisional.

**Models of explanation.** This research aims to validate, fine tune, and adjust the notions of legitimation in the context of community development. As a consequence, special attention has been paid to the “logic of explanation” that guides this process of comparison and generalization. According to Van de Ven (2007), two commonly used models of explanation are to be distinguished in social research: a variance model and a process model (p. 143). A variance model explains social phenomena in terms of cause and effect chains, a deductive line of reasoning considering causality as the consequence of independent variables influencing depending variables. As argued in Chapter 3, the variance model is useful (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 162). if one wants to answer “what” questions (e.g. what is professional legitimacy and what constitutes it?). On the contrary, the process model is useful if one wants to answer “how” questions (e.g. how does the process of legitimacy management evolve in a certain incident?), where process is considered "a sequence of events or activities that describe how things change over time" (p.197). Van de Ven defines the process model as “an historical developmental perspective (on) incidents, activities, or stages, that unfold over the duration of an entity being studied” (Van de Ven, 2007, p 210). Reduction of complexity as a criterion for explaining social phenomena is central to the variance model, whereas “versatility” is a criterion for the process model.

In Chapter 3, the two logics of explanation have already been discussed in depth and translated into the two distinct conceptual frameworks. For now, the outline of the application of the process model and variance model is reprised in short in order to weave it into the different components of the research approach in general.

This distinction of variance-based and process-based explanations is reflected in the research approach. First of all, the approach sought to describe the contextual dimension of professional legitimacy by examining the constituents of legitimacy in different professional community development practices. Secondly, it examined the generative mechanism of legitimation. Table 4.1 presents an overview of the congruence in decisions founding the research approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF CASE STUDY</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION</th>
<th>UNIT OF COMPARISON</th>
<th>MODEL OF EXPLANATION</th>
<th>FOCUS OF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causal nomothetic</td>
<td>Cross contextual</td>
<td>Variance in con-</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Contrast of con-texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptive-ideo</td>
<td>Real time</td>
<td>Legitimation</td>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Parallel demonstration of theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideographic</td>
<td>Cases with max-</td>
<td>strategies</td>
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Table 4.1 Overview of the congruence in decisions in the research strategy with regard to the different types of case study approaches.

**4.4. Research strategy and design**

In this study, the decision regarding selection of cases was made in order to enable a valid comparative strategy across contexts and professional legitimization practices. In addition, the research design had to be robust enough to guide the ethnographic work in different contexts, while simultaneously being flexible enough to identify, isolate, frame and consequently elaborate, inci-
idents of legitimation. The latter were classified as embedded units, in terms of incidents of professional legitimation occurring during the case study. These units needed to provide a basis for the reconstruction how community development professional manage challenges of legitimacy.

In order to guarantee both variety of the cases, as well as access to the daily practices, a well-deliberated selection strategy was applied. In order to be granted access to the daily practices of the professionals, it was paramount to become embedded with, and consequently accepted by, the professionals and to be seen as a “non-intrusive” third person. The researcher needed to adjust to the rhythm of the daily work, while at the same time maintaining a workable schedule within the time limits of a three-month period.

4.4.1. Sampling: Selection of the cases

One of the two purposes of the sampling strategy was to maximize the variety of the cases. Because of the intention to study the selected cases in depth, a small number of cases was required (Yin, 1994). As a consequence of the ambition to explain variations in the constituents of professional legitimation in community development, heterogeneity or variation was paramount. The four criteria for establishing “maximum variety” of the cases were:

1. Variety in local traditions of civil society and governance. This was based on the assumption that the strength of civic organizations, informal community relationships, and local governance can be a determinant for the professional legitimation of community development professionals.
2. Variety in social policies. This was based on the assumption that social policies organize the provision of community development services at a local level, such as by funding and framing mission, vision and targets of local community development organizations. The selection was based on differences in elaborateness and comprehensiveness of social policies.
3. Variety in local development needs. This was based on the assumption that both objectively and subjectively, communities differ in needs, capacities, and aspirations.
4. Variety in professionalization designs. This was based on the assumption that besides formal and informal education, the role of professional education, the adoption and application of abstract knowledge and practice models, the licensing of access to the profession also is a determinant for the strategic legitimation of professional community development practices.

The four aforementioned sampling criteria are presented in the table 4.2 below.

Chelsea Collaborative, Chelsea (Massachusetts, USA). Chelsea Collaborative is a community organizing initiative in Chelsea, an urban industrial town divided by the Mystic River from the city of Boston. The organization has 10-15 staff members and it focuses on six major themes: tenants’ rights, green space (environmental justice), immigrant rights, youth employment, education, and voting. The Latino population in Chelsea, many of whom are undocumented, forms a large part of their constituency. The organizers apply a grassroots form of organizing, ranging from doorknocking actions, inviting people to join rallies, and connecting with existing networks and thematic coalitions. Their activities are aimed at developing power bases for both practical, as well as structural, legislative reform. The organization is predominantly funded by private and religious donor-organizations.
Table 4.2: Typology of the cases based on selection criteria for maximizing variation

Social Neighborhood Teams (Sociale Wijkteams) Landlust & De Boeg, Bos en Lommer (Amsterdam, The Netherlands). The Social Neighborhood Teams Landlust and De Boeg have about 20-25 staff members. They are recently formed neighborhood-based, multidisciplinary teams of social-case work, social-legal services and community work. These teams are set up to provide a low-threshold, accessible form of social services, informed by the philosophy of “activating citizenship.” In practice, this means that applications for social support are first of all screened for possibilities to engage the social network of the claimant in the solution of the problems reported. Community workers function first of all as liaison officers between the local-level government and community boards. At the same time, they are deployed in order to engage not-yet-organized community members in the solving of neighborhood problems around issues of livability. The Social Neighborhood Teams are financed by local government as part of the Social Support Act policy framework.

Child Aid Doornkop (Humana), Doornkop (Johannesburg, South Africa). Child Aid Doornkop (CAD) is a community-based organization in Doornkop, an informal settlement at the borders of Soweto. Originally set up as a preschool, the organization has evolved into a full-fledged community services center, offering home-based care, family support, AIDS-HIV counseling, and education on income generation, such as home gardening and skills development. Most of the workers receive a monthly stipend as volunteers. Community development activities are initiated by so called “area leaders,” 12 members of the CAD staff that has been assigned to a geographical unit or block. They organize weekly meetings with local people to discuss community issues, disseminate information, and produce crafts and arts to be sold at the local market. Child Aid Doornkop receives basic funding for management staff from their Swiss-based mother-organization, Humana People to People, as well as donations from private organizations, such as Microsoft. Considerable financial support comes from the Department of Social Development for programs such as home-based care, HIV/AIDS counseling, and family supports.

The second selection criterion for the case study research was accessibility. Because of the small sample, it was necessary to guarantee maximizing the information that could be provided by key-informants and other respondents in the study. The sites for research (the cases) had to be accessible for a longer period, so that exploration of the professional practices was possible. This crite-
tion for gathering information was met by seeking connection with projects and partners with whom some degree of cooperation already existed. The Sociale Wijkteams in Amsterdam was linked to research projects of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences; the Chelsea Collaborative was connected to to professor Lee Staples (Boston University, second supervisor), and Child Aid Doornkop had a linkage to professor Trudie Knijn, (Utrecht University, first supervisor).

### 4.4.2. Data sources

The data sources were chosen to provide a rich enough variety of data to relate, as well as to triangulate, with the research questions. As mentioned in section 3.3, this study combined a cross-contextual approach with a real-time approach to inquire into issues of strategic professional legitimacy.

In the *cross-contextual approach*, the researcher engaged in a mixture of participant observation, desk research, and topic interviews to collect data. This collection strategy has provided data for the analysis of the constituents of professional legitimacy. The question about the impact of contextual constraints on legitimation, such as traditions of civil society, could only have been addressed by a holistic focus on the respective cases (Yin, 2008). The use of different data sources, such as desk research, participant observation, and topic interviews, contributed to creating a comprehensive understanding of legitimacy management in the different contexts. It also provided a basis for the comparative analysis.

The *real-time approach* required a more focused strategy for gathering data. The challenge here was to identify so-called “incidents - specific situations, moments, and cases within the respective case studies - that could be suitable for a more systematic description. Hence, the researcher had to be alert for these “incidents” that occurred during the field visits, be that in actual real-life situations or in stories and recollections that were brought forward by the community development professionals or participants in community development activities. Once such an incident was identified, the researcher would address it in individual topic interviews, or during the group interviews and focus group meetings, if it was part of a more collectively experienced incident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH APPROACH</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASE STUDY CROSS CONTEXTUAL</td>
<td>Contextualizing constituents of professional legitimacy</td>
<td>Desk research</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Topic interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMBEDDED UNITS REAL TIME</td>
<td>Describing the process of legitimation (“legitimacy management”)</td>
<td>Topic interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.3*: The use of data sources according to research approach
4.4.4. Units of research

In all three case studies, the researcher started his inquiry by identifying the units of research that could provide information. This information had to encompass knowledge about local community development practices, issues of strategic professional legitimacy, specific incidents of legitimacy management, and contextual features. Three units of research were central in this process of identification: (1) the respondents; (2) the settings for research; and (3) relevant embedded units. These three units also had to be relevant as sources for information and be specific enough for later comparative analysis:

1. Respondents were chosen according to both their willingness to participate in the research, as well as for their relevance as acting professionals. This meant that they had to be visible actors in the settings and activities under study. In addition, a number of years of experience was necessary. This secured the reflection, comparison, and contrasting of situations and challenges in interviews and group meeting. Gender, age and formal education were not specific criteria for selection.

2. Settings were selected according to the probability of occurrence of incidents that could be relevant for later analysis of the constituents of professional legitimation. Specifically, settings were chosen where interactions between professionals and community members took place. These settings could like field visits, regular assemblies, and, in Chelsea, community rallies. In addition, the researcher spent time in the offices and public areas of the community development organizations to observe and record formal and informal interactions.

3. Embedded units were incidents selected for their possible relevance as sites for demonstrations of the operational dimension legitimation. These incidents were sought in weekly staff meetings, group interviews, as well as public interactions between professionals and community members. These incidents were later used as subjects for further reflection.

4.4.5. Limitations

The multiple and comparative case-study approach presented a number of limitations in addressing the research questions as formulated. First was the three-month time limit of the ethnographic work - an important limitation in all case studies. Therefore, some of the legitimacy issues could not be followed up over the period of time that ideally would be required in order to document them fully. However, this limitation was countered as much as possible by engaging the involved community development professionals to reflect upon these challenges in interview and group meetings.

A second limitation as a consequence of the three month presence in the settings under research has been that the researcher could not create enough rapport with the community members. This limitation has been countered by organizing data collection in focus group meetings, which created a more distilled source of information.
4.5. Data collection and analysis

The primary data techniques used in this research were topic interviews, participant observation, desk-research, and group discussion. Secondary sources were scientific journal articles about the context of the cases, as well as other written artifacts, such as policy papers, websites, and communication material used in everyday practice (announcements, posters etc.).

4.5.1. Field research

The field research was organized in three stages, each with separate goals and foci: introduction, immersing, and concluding.

Introduction stage (2 weeks). During the introductory stage of the field studies the data collection process focused on collecting information about the organization, including one or two meetings with the management of the organization to identify the initial key informants, specific themes, and important upcoming events. In addition, the possibilities for group sessions were explored. In the first weeks of the field research, the central contextual themes also were traced, allowing the depiction of the topics of central concern to be researched during the possible participant observation moments. These topics were informed by the four contextual determinants that are considered of influence: civil society, development issues, social policy, and professionalization. At this stage, the topics were further explored by consulting scientific literature to formulate “sensitizing concepts.” For instance, during the first stage of the field research in Chelsea (USA), an initial understanding of the structure of social policies was created by reading literature on the provision of social services in the US. Criteria for selecting key informants were openness to the presence of the researcher and relevant daily practices. In practice, a mix of formally and non-formally educated community development professionals with different levels of experience was composed, and the total number of professionals to be followed in daily practice and consequentially interviewed was dependent on availability.

Immersing stage (8 weeks). During the immersing stage, the focus was on increasing involvement in the daily practices of the community development professionals. The researcher was present during week days, and did some voluntary work ranging from helping out with the preparation of activities and participating in rallies (Chelsea), providing training (Amsterdam), to assisting in coaching a men’s support group (Doornkop). The aim of these participatory activities was to create rapport with the professionals and as a consequence, to enable informal conversations that led to deeper understanding of the way they experience the contextual constraints. The researcher kept a log on these activities, focusing on both the four central contextual features, as well as events where issues of legitimacy were at stake. Also, notes were kept on non-specific information in order to ensure openness to eventual new perspectives and opportunities for further research. During formal and informal meetings, extensive notes were taken, and – whenever agreed upon- these meetings were recorded for later transcribing. During this stage, the researcher also further engaged in informal contacts with the assigned key informants, both to explore elements of strategic professional legitimacy as well as to assess willingness and relevance for the planned topic interviews.

At this stage, adaptation to the constraints of the organization was important. This led in all three field-studies to an adjustment in the original set-up of the research. For instance, in Doornkop it became gradually clear that the topic interviews as constructed were not able to tap into the professionals’ experiences. This was possibly due to their modest proficiency in speaking English. A second reason was a misunderstanding by the researcher about the abilities of the professionals to dis-
cuss practice in more abstract terms. With the upcoming group interviews in mind, it was decided to reformulate the topics in so called “vignettes”. These vignettes described situations, which posed practical dilemmas; this invited the community workers to make use of their well-developed ability to think and reflect as storytellers. An adjustment in all three cases concerned the kind of professional practices that should be the subject of field research. In Chelsea, for instance, the research shifted its initial focus from the work with environmental issues to the activities around youth, housing and coalition building that became urgent during the time of the field research.

Concluding stage (2 weeks). In the concluding stage, the researcher organized a more aggregative data collection strategy by organizing group sessions in different forms. Goals here were to deepen and collectivize the findings from the previous stages of the research. Also in this stage the first general impressions of the researcher were validated based on a preliminary review of the data. Therefore, most of the group interviews were held during this stage, and preliminary findings were discussed in more depth with respondents.

4.5.2. Research instruments

The ethnographic research strategy applied a mixture of research instruments, in order to allow data triangulation as an instrument for checking internal validity in the later analysis. One of the vulnerabilities of qualitative research in general, and in the case study approach in particular, is its limited basis for generalizability (Yin, 2008). This can be countered by data triangulation (Yin, 2008). Another methodological challenge has been designing and fine-tuning the research instruments. This process needed to do justice to both the idioms in respective local practices, as well as secure a collection of data that would eventually allow comparative analysis. For that reason, a background conceptual framework was utilized to sensitize key concepts in the topics to be discussed and explored in interviews, observational activities, and document research.

Topic interviews. The interviews were conducted by the researcher in Dutch (Amsterdam) and English (Chelsea and Doornkop) respectively; the latter translated by a fluent English speaking research assistant. In Doornkop the researcher chose to conduct the group interviews in a mix of English and Zulu in order to overcome inhibition by the participants. The latter choice was informed by the evaluation of the participants that they were not able to express themselves well enough in English. All interviews were recorded with consent of the interviewees and transcribed in word format for integration in a text analysis program.

In the three case studies, a total of 31 individual interviews were conducted, of which 25 were with community development professionals (Chelsea: 9; Amsterdam: 6; Doornkop 10) and 6 were with experts and stakeholders. Each case study also involved one of more group interviews ( Chelsea: 1 (10 professionals); Amsterdam: 5 (9 professionals); and Doornkop 2 (15 professionals).

Participant observation. The participant observations were supportive of the data collection process for gathering contextual and anecdotal information. The researcher took the role of participant as unobtrusively as possible, although he was introduced when entering situations where he was unknown to the other participants. In addition, sometimes he participated in a more active and pronounced manner when he supported activities of the community development organization as a volunteer. When possible, the situations of participant observation where recorded with more or less explicit consent.

Logbooks. The researcher kept a logbook of all of his activities during the field research. This included logs of dates, times, persons, events and observational notes. He also made notes of inter-
esting, challenging or surprising situations, and reflections that could be of use for adjusting his re-
search strategy or focus of research.

Group interviews. In all three cases, group interviews were an intrinsic part of the data collect-
tion process. In order to enable group interviewing in hectic community development practice in all
settings, the framing, set up and programming of the group interviews were integrated as much as
possible as a contribution to solve general concerns of the organization and its professionals. Conse-
quently, this led to a variety of formats. In Chelsea, the group interviews were carefully prepared
from a preceding survey by one of the community organizers and the researcher. Here the group ses-
sion was linked to the urgent topic of coalition building. In Bos en Lommer and Doornkop, the group
interviews were programmed as training sessions discussing incidents related to professional legiti-
mation.

Artifacts. During the fieldwork, the researcher collected as much available material as possible
that could support the documentation of the daily community development practices. This included
posters, folders, web sites, publications, and photographs.

Documents. Documents primarily consisted of scholarly articles published between 2000 and
2014, which informed about civil society, social policy, developmental issues and professionalization
practices in the settings under study. This secondary literature provided an informational basis for
the case study, a frame of reference, validation, and comparison in the data analysis afterwards.

Database. A presentable database of all the relevant data was created for each case study, con-
sisting of observant notes, log books, transcribed interviews, artifacts, photographs, research instru-
ments, primary and secondary literature. This material will enable other researchers to access the
evidence directly and not be limited to the end product of the data presented in this study.

In the presentation of the different case studies, real names were replaced by aliases to secure
anonymity. A list of the original names of the respondents and their aliases is securely saved. In some
cases, while transcribing the group interviews not all names of the participants could be discerned.
Their contribution was coded by attaching a numerical code.

4.5.3. Data analysis

As mentioned previously, there is a large research tradition in community development that
emphasizes the use of indigenous knowledge as a source of wisdom to understand local community
issues. A focus on what the community development professional does is mostly anecdotal and case-
based. In this study, a more systematic review of professional practices was aimed for, and that also
required a more systematic approach for both collection and analysis of the data.

The software used for data analysis was MAXQDA. This program allows the processing of com-
prehensive data sources and a systematic document analysis strategy. The analysis proceeded in four
consecutive steps:

1. Domain coding. In the first stage, data with regard to the context of the cases and the
   professional practices were coded with the purpose of creating a systematic typology of
   the contexts for all three case studies. Input for these descriptions consisted of second-
ary literature and material from logbooks. Primary (news) sources and information de-
   rived from interviews and observations provided additional material. General sensitizing
   concepts for the description of the context for practice included social policy, local de-
   velopment issues, civil society, local governance and professionalization.
2. **Taxonomic and pattern coding.** In order to identify and describe the building blocks of professional legitimacy in the three contexts of study, the researcher applied two coding cycles. The first cycle used a predefined heuristic framework to categorize fragments in interviews based on the *taxonomy* of legitimation derived from Suchmann (1995). The data, primarily from individual and group interviews, were structured according to these sensitizing concepts. After arranging these fragments along Suchmann’s taxonomy, the second cycle started. This cycle used *pattern coding* as technique (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding provides explanatory meta codes, to summarize the ideographical meanings. These meanings were derived from the respondents' statements, attached to the coded fragments of the first coding cycle. This way, more emic descriptive categories were developed, consistent with the perspectives from the respondents in the studied context. To analyze the operational dimension of professional legitimation, the same coding strategies were applied. Here the sensitizing concepts were derived from Suchmann’s taxonomy of the legitimating resources.

3. **Template matching.** The third step of the analysis was “*template matching*”, and here the focus was on similarities and differences in the *content* of the narratives (Reynolds, 2003). Template analysis is said to combine inductive and deductive approaches to the analysis of the data. Here an inductive approach was applied to search for analogies in both constituents and strategies of professional legitimation. Based on the central concepts of the Capabilities Approach a comparison (Chatman, 1989; Nishina & Bellmore, 2006) was made between both constituents and strategies of legitimation in the different studied contexts, This comparison was structured according to the contextual dimensions, and it yielded a hierarchical structure of meta codes and its different qualitative dimensions.

### 4.5.4. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for the analysis is derived from legitimacy theory, the Capabilities Approach, notions of deliberation from the social inquiry approach of Bent Flyvbjerg (2001) and “discursive accountability” of Romm (2002). Each case has been analyzed at three levels: 

![Levels of the conceptual frameworks used in the analysis of the data.](image)
1. The level of the case covering the four main contextual features (social policy, local development needs, traditions of civil society and governance, and professionalization) within the evaluative framework of the Capabilities Approach referred to as commodities;

2. The level of the embedded units depicting the incidents of legitimation, drawing from professionals’ reflections during interviews and observations;

3. The level of the community development professional, strategically managing the challenges of professional legitimation. The community development professionals’ reflections are the primary source of data for both the study of the contextual and the operational dimension of legitimation.

In Chapter 3, a more elaborate account of the conceptual framework was provided. Figure 4.1 depicts the analytic levels of the concepts applied. In the following chapters, a more detailed account of how the concepts have been applied will be offered.

4.6. Validity & Reliability

In this study, the different requirements to guarantee validity and reliability have been met by the following activities:

Internal validity of the research refers to the internal consistency of the conceptual framework that is used in this research. The design of the framework is derived from a well-deliberated stratification of the cases under study at three levels: The level of the case, the generative mechanism, and the embedded units. Each of these levels have been described and delineated very precisely according to appropriate heuristic concepts.

External validity of the research refers to the extent in which the results can be generalized across contexts and people. In this study, a comparative multiple case study has been set up according to maximum variety of professional contexts. The generalization is based on a comparison of contextual constituents and legitimating strategies in the three studied contexts. No ambition existed to generalize these findings as representing the entire field of community development practice.

Discriminant validity refers to the role of rival explanations for the results found. First of all, there is the use of literature from different knowledge domains (care, education, management) that reduces the risk of rival explanations by transcending the unilateral focus on the scientific debate within community development literature.

Content validity refers to the extent to which the conceptual frameworks actually cover the phenomena they claim to cover. This study utilized a cyclical combining of nomothetic and idiographic knowledge strategies. As a result a robust approach was achieved for both the identification of contextual aspects of professional legitimation and legitimation strategies. In addition, a strategy for establishing convergent validity has been applied that included checks between the theory and its central concepts on one side and the usability of these concepts on the other. This was done in particular through a permanent reflection on the applicability of the concepts to make sense of the empirical material.

Reliability of the research refers to the repeatability of the research process and the results found. To ensure this, first of all, every step in the research has been documented in a log. In addition, much attention has been given to the precise application of the concepts used in the analysis
with reference to the source literature. A third assurance for the reliability of results found is data triangulation by means of combining scientific literature, observations, interviews and documents. Of course, all research material has been stored safely for eventual later retrieval.

4.7. Summary and overview

In this chapter, the methodology for this study has been outlined. The research has adopted a critical realist perspective on knowledge development, assuming that research has to be reflective about the claims made that were based on empirical observations. Social phenomena have to be studied as being a result, or outcome, of different conjectures between contextual constraints and generative mechanisms. Consequently, professional legitimation has been structured in a Context-Mechanisms-Outcome patterns logic. By conducting a multiple comparative case study, the contexts of the mechanism under study have been varied, so that both context-bound, as well as more universal features of legitimation in community development practices could be identified. The table on the next page further summarizes the different decisions in methodology.

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<th>DECISIONS</th>
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Table 4.4 Overview of the methodological choices in Chapter 4
Introducing the case studies

In the next chapters, professional legitimation in Bos en Lommer (Chapter 5), Chelsea (Chapter 6) and Doornkop (Chapter 7) will be examined. These chapters describe professional legitimation as part of local community development practices. This description focuses on the two dimensions of professional legitimation that have been outlined in chapter 3. First of all, it will document what community development professionals see as constitutive for their professional mandate in relation to a number of contextual features. These features are considered as constraints for practice. For instance, the local traditions of civil society and the density of local organizations are seen as relevant for the legitimacy of the community workers, since these factors can support or limit their local mandate. Similarly relevant are the constraints of social policy, which can provide the financial support for community work, and hence define the aims and targets that community development professionals must comply with. Local development issues are relevant for the priorities that community workers have to respond to. Finally, the status of the community development workers as professionals is considered relevant, since it directly impacts their ability to practice effectively in the community.

In addition to this contextual dimension of professional legitimation, the case studies will also account for the active role community development professionals play in the shaping of their mandate to work with the local people. This operational dimension entails the management of professional legitimacy over time. These processes of legitimacy management will be described as part of the means of obtaining specific forms of legitimacy.

Each of these case studies will yield a description in terms of a context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configuration. This configuration is used as a heuristic logic to organize the relation between the contextual features of specific community development practices, the mechanism of local legitimacy management strategies, and the outcome in terms of the constituents of professional legitimacy.

Chapter 8 will examine the possible generic features of professional legitimation that emerge from comparison of the respective CMO’s of Bos en Lommer, Chelsea, and Doornkop.

The presentation of the findings of the separate case studies is four-fold. Each case study starts with an elaborate sketch of the local community development context, its local traditions of civil society and governance, the local development issues, and the forms of professionalization the community workers have adopted. To do justice at the community-oriented nature of all three practices, these professional will from this point be addressed as being community workers.

The second section describes thematically what community workers consider as constitutive, formative aspects of their professional mandate. The sensitizing concepts of passive and active support, continuity and credibility are the primary variables examined here. These concepts, outlined in Chapter 3, were derived from legitimacy theory.

The third section of each case study describes the legitimation strategies as active endeavors of the community development professionals to obtain professional legitimacy. These strategies are based on the use of legitimating resources in the context of their interactions with local people. A conceptual framework for legitimacy management, outlined in chapter 3, functions as a methodological tool. The logic of the Capabilities Approach is foundational here. Consequently, the legitimation strategies will be described as active efforts of community development professionals to use their legitimating capabilities to acquire a professional mandate. These legitimating capabilities will be examined by analyzing the reflections of community workers in incidents where their legitimacy
has been challenged. Handling these challenges requires that community development professionals actively account for their actions to the community. This has been phrased in Chapter 3 as “discursive accountability.” This discursive accountability will be studied by examining how practitioners operate to develop and secure a framework for community development processes that is recognizable, acceptable and useful for the local community. Their ability to acknowledge the local community members’ knowledge, morals and interests is seen as crucial.

The fourth part of each case study will summarize the identified contextual constituents of legitimacy and the strategies of legitimacy management. This will yield, per studied context, a specific context-mechanism-outcome configuration that forms the basis for the comparative chapter 8. In this chapter, the generic features of first of all the contextual resources for community workers will be outlined. Secondly, what also will be presented in chapter 8 are the common characteristics of the legitimating capabilities, required to obtain professional legitimacy at the community level.
Chapter 5. A volatile and precarious mandate in times of transition: Participation and activation work in Bos en Lommer (Amsterdam)

In Bos en Lommer, Participation and Activation Employees (PAEs) work as part of a multidisciplinary Social Neighborhood Team (SNT). These Amsterdam community workers coach neighborhood committees, and actively reach out to local people who are not yet active. In this vibrant borough of Amsterdam, the folksy, as well as the highly educated, tend to engage in strong discussions on common interests. In the background, grass-roots ethnic groups voice the concerns of the local migrant communities. Amidst this, PAEs experience their professional mandate as volatile and vulnerable. What adds to that sense of precarious legitimacy, are the recent transitions in social policy and the contradicting governance agendas at the local level. How do these community workers manage these challenges? How do they legitimize their precarious, volatile professional position?

5.1. Bos en Lommer, a borough crowded with diverse community interests

Bos en Lommer is an ethnically diverse, predominantly low-income, and originally working-class borough. It is situated at the NW-side of Amsterdam. Until 2010, it was one of the independent “boroughs” of Amsterdam. However, since 2013, Bos en Lommer has become part of a new, larger governing unit called Amsterdam West. Bos en Lommer houses approximately 30,660 inhabitants on a 2.71 Sq km (2003). With an average household income of 19.150 euro, Bos en Lommer is one of the poorer neighborhoods of the Netherlands. Most of the houses, originating from the 1940’s and 1950’s, are owned by social housing associations. In 2010, local government acknowledged the need to improve the safety, livability, social cohesion, and the quality of public space. In addition, government and community members ventilated about the need to invest in job creation. Moreover, a more attractive portfolio of local shops was procured.

5.2. The Social Neighborhood Team

In 2013, local government contracted Combiwel, one of the major social work services providers in Amsterdam. Combiwel is a non-profit foundation focusing on pre-school activities, community work, social case work, and community centers. In the past, part of its organizational strategy was the enlistment of former – usually small - neighborhood based organizations of social services. Now, Combiwel is responsible to organize social support services in Amsterdam West, but also in other parts of the city. In Bos en Lommer, the basic structure for service provision is the Social Neighborhood Team, SNT (in Dutch: “Sociale Wijkteam”). In 2013, these SNTs were installed in each of the six sub-boroughs of Bos en Lommer. The establishment of these SNTs coincided with the reorganization of the existing vivid fabric of social and community services in Bos en Lommer. This all did not go without a shock.

This shock was caused by a sudden decline in investments in the local fabric by the local government. After all, during the previous years there was a firm financial injection in the neighborhood development of Bos en Lommer. This investment was part of the ‘Krachtwijken’-policy (“Powerful Neighborhoods”). This resulted in an outburst of formal and informal initiatives. Well-equipped community centers were established, and numerous informal community initiatives found shelter.

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5 For reasons of readability, the Participation and Activation Employees will be referred to as PAEs
6 Buurtuitoeringsprogramma Wijkaanpak Bos en Lommer, 2010
There was an accessible community-based system of organizational and financial support. The latter was provided by a considerable variety of small-scale professional community development organizations (Van Ankeren, Tonkens & Verhoeven, 2010).

In the slipstream of the Dutch austerity measures that followed the global financial crisis of 2008, social policy was decentralized and local governments had to reconsider their investments in community development work and neighborhood infrastructure. In addition, housing associations were required by the national government to focus on their “core tasks” only - social housing provision. The Amsterdam government continued community-led organizing experiments; however, in line with the new governance principles, they merged the many community resources at the neighborhood level, and outsourced the executive responsibility to Combiwel in Amsterdam West. Several community centers were closed. Staff from similar but smaller organizations which no longer received funding were rehired and partly reemployed in “Social Neighborhood Teams.” These teams, developed nationwide for local social services, had to integrate existing social work systems, in order to work in a multidisciplinary fashion, and to guide volunteers in social support, instead of practicing social support themselves. SNTs were seen as an answer to growing political dissent about the fragmentation of professional family and children support services in particular. At the same time, SNTs also had to compensate for the budget cuts in social services. Simultaneously, several policy transitions like youth care, specialized care, and home based social work were in preparation to become part of the decentralized governance system.

Field research was conducted during the first months when the SNTs were in-development in Bos en Lommer. The workers were being re-staffed from a variety of neighborhood-based centers into two community headquarters. As part of the SNTs teams, they received new job descriptions and job titles (Participation and Activation Employee, PAE). During the first day of fieldwork, a sense of confusion, even unrest, was tangible. The opening question —“What are main concerns in your daily practices?”- was the topic in the first focus group meeting which included the nine PAEs, and eventually, this led to an outburst of emotions.

The case study combined field research with focus group meetings. Four PAEs were followed during their daily practices (Marjon, Wilma, Wouter, Bart). Additionally, five PAEs joined in the bi-weekly focus group meetings. Each of the total of nine participants in the focus group meeting was asked to prepare a presentation which involved a critical incident in recent practice that would later be discussed in two separate groups. The results arising from the initial analyses of the material from the interviews and focus group meetings were validated during a staff meeting in September 2014. In particular, feedback led to adjusting, what was seen as structural or more transient elements of PAEs’ practice.

5.3. Participation and Activation in a Social Neighborhood Committee

At the time of the field research, PAEs’ tasks were threefold: (1) Coaching of neighborhood committees; (2) Supporting informal community initiatives, including social reactivation of community members; and (3) Multidisciplinary work in the SNTs. However, some of the PAEs had additional, more specific tasks, such as the support of local minority organizations. In this section, their common practices are focused upon.

Coaching the neighborhood committees (NC). These NCs of local residents are a semi-official brand of governance. They function as a grass-roots community organization. For PAEs, the NC-
officials have to be approached with caution. For local politicians, this level of informal governance is precious. It is one of the rare tangible forms of organized voluntary neighborhood activism. NCs supervise how neighborhood funds are being spent. Furthermore, they inform local politicians about community concerns. And lastly, NCs also participate in the evaluation of how organizations such as Combiwel perform in the neighborhood.

These NCs have been, since the 1960’s, one of the focal points of Dutch community development. Community development professionals (“opbouwwerkers”) support and facilitate these committees. Ideally, NCs represent a cross-section of neighborhood population. For the PAEs, constructive and broad participation of community members in NCs is paramount. The regular NC meetings lead to rising professional blood pressure. Hence, adversarial sentiments within these NCs are not uncommon. Moreover, if the local alderman is due to visit an NC-meeting, PAEs hope the members will behave politely and constructively. PAEs feel responsible for the meetings, but also believe that they are being held responsible for what happens during the meetings.

Coproduction and cooperation are typically Dutch strategies to connect horizontal and vertical levels of governance. Nevertheless, the voices from the street do not always match with official local politics. Traditionally, Dutch community development professionals were the go-between for those two worlds. Not unusually, neighborhood committees tend to attract people with outspoken opinions. This can upstage fruitful collaboration.

For PAEs, NCs are one of the few stages where their professionalism can be demonstrated. It requires handling the best of neighborhood involvement and the imperfections of people expressing that involvement. However, this is also a hazardous setting, a challenge to their professional legitimacy. Some of the NC’s members also have or have had an official political mandate. For instance, this occurs when a former alderman or an elected local council member is active in an NC. According to several statements by PAEs, in such cases, formal politics risk contaminating the discussions. Not unusually, members with double mandates tend to be dominant, and this creates pressure in the meetings. They sometimes openly scrutinize the outcomes of sessions; sometimes they suggest that they will oppose the NC’s decisions in the political arena. Besides this type of social pressure, PAEs also feel a risk of damaging their reputation when sessions derail. The visiting alderman might be alarmed and urge his staff of government officials to “correct” the flaws in the decision-making abilities of the NC in question.

As elsewhere, community development workers in Bos en Lommer also have to deal with the tacit “needs” and the outspoken “wants” in the community. They work with cooperative minds and resistant voices from the inhabitants. At times, public issues disguised as personal discontent can evolve into a raw political game at the neighborhood level.

**Supporting informal community initiatives.** A second task is the mediation between informal community activities and formally assigned community resources. In Bos en Lommer, local people sometimes visit community centers, or ask PAEs for financial and HRM-like support for their ideas. For instance, if a neighborhood wants to organize a street party, it can request funds for the rental of a tent. It also works the other way around. For instance, this is true when someone offering to give music lessons is looking for a way to make that offer public.

Nowadays, PAEs pay extra attention to the “vulnerable,” the less socially resilient people in the neighborhoods. Some of Bos en Lommer’s residents have minor mental, physical or psychological disabilities. Before the budget cuts, these people were accustomed to making a daily visit to one of the walk-in community centers, be it for a breakfast, a cup of coffee, or just a chat. Now, most of these centers have been closed, while some have merged with the specialized community-based
care for psychiatric patients. For the shy, retiring people, the threshold for those centers is too high. They must register before entrance, but this process lacks the familiar atmosphere that they were used to previously. The other, remaining community center, is now home base for grass-roots ethnic groups. According to Wilma, a PAE, organizing a detour to these two new facilities, requires diplomacy and patience.

Wilma: “There is a woman who comes to the neighborhood center (Buurtkamer). She was saying ‘I have a great idea.’ She shows us a picture of a wooden bathtub to make. Then everyone thinks: ‘Girl, please go do that, but not here, you know?’ Then, it is yet another step to take. But if I invite her to work at the new center (‘Kijkduin’), I want to know for sure that she will arrive there. And not only that she goes, but also that they are taking care of her [at Kijkduin, jg]. That she will find someone who comforts her at least three times. Because if she comes once and no one makes contact with her, she will never return.”

Several PAEs are aware of the social consequences of the closing of several neighborhood centers. They adopted a more proactive approach to people in the street.

Central in the current community development approach in The Netherlands, is the stimulation of informal, also called “voluntary,” engagement. In Amsterdam (Burgermonitor, 2013), this engagement ranges from signing a petition, the visit to community meetings, or the participation in neighborhood action groups. Increasingly, however, local social policy dictates a more intense form of voluntary involvement. This involvement stretches to care, such as for the local people-in-need. Statistics show that in Amsterdam between 2 and 6% of the population is involved in such civic activities (Burgermonitor, 2013). Despite this low degree of civic engagement, people do report a strong connection to their own neighborhood. More specifically in Amsterdam West, of which Bos en Lommer is a part, almost 40% feels this neighborhood bond. Even a slightly larger proportion of Amsterdam West actually expresses the willingness to become involved in issues that are affecting their own neighborhood. These statistics seem to point to a yet untapped potential for informal engagement at the neighborhood level.

Traditionally, activating that potential for voluntary engagement is the task of neighborhood-level community development organizations. In contrast to the formal community involvement of the NC, the neighborhood agenda reveals a wide range of informal activities: a repair saloon, a sing-a-long, an Alzheimer Café. On a regular day, between 9 AM and 9PM, almost hourly a neighborhood activity takes place, organized by volunteers. Government funding for these activities tended to be easily available. But recently, that has changed; budgets were reduced, and the previously visible professionals in neighborhood centers have been reassigned to the Social Neighborhood Team.

In addition to supporting informal neighborhood engagement, PAEs received a new assignment. This entails mediating between the long-time unemployed and available community services. During introductory meetings, PAEs inform and hope to recruit long-term unemployed community members to “quid pro quo” activities: income support for community services. Reseach by Kampen (2014), however, challenges the effectiveness of this form of planned volunteerism. The list of services is considerable. It goes from working in community gardens, reading books to the elderly, to bar service at of the community center. This is a novelty in social reactivation, enforced by the Law on Participation (2015) and implemented by the Amsterdam Municipality. This assignment came to PAEs in a new domain, that of local labor policy. This Participation Law provided opportunities, as it would enable them to connect to the formerly socially isolated. However, this task to mediate mandatory local engagement is inconsistent with their traditional position as mediator of voluntary local engagement.
**Working in a Social Neighborhood Team (SNT).** The social neighborhood team was, at the time of the field research, a widely acclaimed social innovation. This multidisciplinary team for neighborhood-based care and welfare was a response to the following transitions in social policy:

“The participation law, juvenile law and the new WMO give municipalities more responsibilities and fewer financial resources. That necessitates a different system. Include regional cooperation, integrated services to citizens, community work, and a fundamental change of processes and calculation, financing systems, and above all, a different way of thinking and acting. Especially the new WMO (Social Support Act, jg), with a different form of participation and resilience as the key concepts. Not the principle of compensation, entitlement to care or thinking in terms of products.”

The SNT had to provide an integrative social work approach. In that SNT, the social worker, the community developer, the social legal advisor, and the family and youth support professionals discussed incoming requests for support. The central question was the activation of local, family and friend-based resources. At the time of the field research, the SNTs were in a start-up phase. A majority of the requests focus on psychosocial issues in families, debt support, and more general issues such as livability and neighborhood activities. The position and role of PAEs did not yet seem to be very well-articulated.

The team leader of SNT Landlust was a very outspoken proponent of this new approach. In her view, the concentration of the different professional expertise into one setting would enable a more effective coordination of requests for social support. In Landlust, she implemented this approach in twice-a-week meetings (‘Round Tables’), set up to provide “tailor-made” support for people-in-need. During these meetings, not only individual requests for professional support were treated, but also collective, group-based strategies were instigated. For instance, people-in-debt were supported by a social-legal professional to secure debt-relief under the condition that they would participate in a series of Financial Cafés in order to get educated on financial matters. The SNT treated requests for funding or other support of neighborhood initiatives by first examining existing community resources.

This SNT-setting was a change, as well as a challenge, for the PAEs, who were accustomed to a high degree of autonomy and now had to cooperate with other professionals. In combination with the recent budget cuts, the new policy frameworks for community engagement, and the extension of the presence of civil servants at the neighborhood level, new and existing practices needed to be combined. All this had implications for the position of community developers when re-examining their professional mandate. Much of the re-examining of their professional legitimacy took place at the time of the field study. In what follows, that search is being explored and documented.

### 5.4. The contextual constituents of the PAE’s professional legitimacy

In the light of above sketched tasks and developments, what constitutes the legitimacy of the PAEs? As sketched in Chapter 3, the location of these constituents draws from what legitimacy theorists (Suchmann, 1995) see as goals of legitimacy management. The following four sensitizing concepts were the starting point for that exploration: (1) the experience of passive support; (2) the experience of active support; (3) the experience of credibility; and (4) the experience of continuity. These sensitizing concepts yielded the following themes

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5.4.1. Recognition for the PAEs presence as an expression of passive support

For PAEs in Bos en Lommer, the experience of passive support seems strongly associated with recognition. In their reflections, recognition presents itself as a tacit, implicit form of consent that PAEs receive from the community members. For instance, this tacit type of support is felt in their role in the neighborhood committee. It is a form of support that is precarious; it is almost a transitory state in accepting the professional as part of the meeting.

An essential aspect of that recognition which PAEs tend to mention, is the organization that they represent. It was an issue among PAEs that the reputation of Combiwel is in the eyes of community members was to a certain degree, "contaminated." One of the reasons for this questionable reputation is the budget cuts for community initiatives that came with the recent arrangement between Combiwel and the local government. Combiwel’s recent activities were linked to the take-over of existing small-scale community organizations. This created “bad blood” with some of the active members of these organizations.

However, the lack of trust in Combiwel in those early days seems to have had an interesting side effect. PAEs signal that as a result, a bonding effect has occurred: personal bonds between the PAE and the local neighborhood representatives have grown in response to the scrutiny surrounding Combiwel. Distrust in the organization, apparently is a mixed blessing, as it can also be an asset by providing an opportunity to create recognition (see Section 5.4). The following incident illustrates how this distrust is being fed. After repeated requests by the NC (neighborhood committee) to provide information on community funding procedures, one day Marjan had to admit to them that she could not provide the information. She just could not find her way through the information system of Combiwel.

Marjon: “Well, we are all in the same situation. I (then) say, ‘Guys, I also suffer from this, that I cannot provide you with the information on time.’

Besides the association of recognition with the organization they represent and their bonding with the local people, a third theme emerges for PAEs. This is somewhat related to bonding, but probably less prone to coincidences. This association is about alignment as an element of recognition. According to PAEs, this refers to their ability to support the process of defining common community interests. This eventually transcends any personal interests, as in the previous example. This alignment is an element of recognition insofar as PAEs see it as a requirement to bring local residents into the process of considering common actions. For instance, Wouter, one of the more experienced community development professionals observed:

“We all agree with each other for the greater part: the people, the civil servants de politicians and the organizations. For eighty percent, we all want the same; for twenty percent we differ in opinions. Let’s use the eighty percent, and not fight each other. Let us use the energy positively.”

Recognition is, in general, an experience of the PAEs that the neighborhood accepts them as a professional. In fact, a common experience in the days of the field research was the fact that they were losing that local recognition. PAEs accounted for that feeling by pointing to the recent shifts in their professional position. The days they could operate quite autonomously were over. Now, a new regime was in place. Their sense of legitimacy switched considerably. No longer did their engage-
ment with the community people seem to count. What did seem to count was how they operated in the multidisciplinary SNT.

That this change of position affected their sense of being recognized by the local residents is, of course, not a surprise. This switch in organizational setting, however, did not compensate for their experience of losing local community members’ support. On the contrary, the new organizational setting did not seem to provide the organizational back-up they used to feel. As mentioned before, the PAEs who are staffed at Combiwel as part of Social Neighborhood Teams, were once functioning in small community development organizations. Funding for community initiatives was relatively easy to access. That easy funding access was due to the fact that in those days those funds were allocated by small-scale community foundations. First there was a re-organization of those foundations. Later, they were incorporated in a welfare organization which was considered to be bureaucratic. These reshufflings eventually blurred the professional position of the community developers. The “pocket money” for organizing neighborhood events was cut, and this impacted their conduct within the formal and informal community structures. Making comparisons between their present and their former organizational support, the PAEs express feelings of professional anomy.

This lack of organizational support experienced by many of the PAEs seems to also affect their ability to function professionally. This is especially true if part of the process of gaining recognition is to face and overcome resistance by the local residents. Local relations are volatile and unstable. In order to earn a position as a professional, the PAEs have to be able to manage that resistance. This requires local recognition for their position.

This concern for being recognized as a professional, points to the type of mandate the PAE is able to obtain to be able to hook up with the NC-members. “What is my professional role?” In terms of legitimacy, the PAE is trying to define the symbolic universe they share with the NC-members. Ideally, their professional contribution (a broadly-defined concept such as “contributing to development”) would resonate with what motivates the NC-members to become part of neighborhood governance. This motivation to participate in organizations such as an NC is formed by personal ambitions and social backgrounds. However, given the amalgam of aspirations that are projected in running NCs, it is not obvious that the PAE and NC-members start with a shared definition of “why and what for are we here together.” In that definition, not only the NC-members’ personal ambitions and backgrounds must be accounted for, but also the role of the PAE needs to be acknowledged. But that type of recognition is not just required to provide the practitioner a position as a professional amidst the local residents. There is more. This recognition is also necessary to anchor his professional activities. Is it not the PAE who is expected to galvanize practices of neighborhood governance by proxy of the NC? This professional assignment necessitates this recognition. It grounds the PAE as practitioner. At the same time, it lays the foundation for the second constituent of the professional mandate: active support.

5.4.2. Engagement as an expression of active support

Engagement is what emerges if one analyzes the associations of PAEs with passive support. Interestingly, PAEs considered a variety of forms as active support, and expressed different degrees of explicitness when discussing their experiences gaining it. The more experienced, the more explicitly one dared to claim this mandate to engage the community.

A third aspect regarding the apparent elusiveness of active support concerns the changing position of the PAEs in the community. Originally, PAEs considered one of their values as being the man or woman “in the middle.” They supported NC meetings, but also provided the members with ser-
vices such as taking minutes, printing material, offering locations, and even providing small funds for participation.

Wouter, one of the senior community development practitioners, and now working as a PAW stated:

“In Bos en Lommer, we carry a double burden, because Buurt participatie (one of the community organizations that merged with Combiwel, jg) was of all the community development organizations the one being loved by neighborhood people the most. In the sense that they really groomed them.”

This quote highlights a significant challenge. Professional legitimacy in working with the neighborhood organizations is found by engaging the members to take charge themselves. It is about mutual engagement. How to work with, or for, the neighborhood people is the question.

In contrast to this stand, there is a possibly transient challenge. This refers to their sense of entitlement to experience active support for their role in the NCs. This is especially relevant in their role to guard due functioning of these NCs. In the history of Dutch community development, neighborhood committees have always been one of the few constant, sustainable and visible actors in community organizing. The PAEs professionally embody that tradition. The neighborhood committees are traditionally the voices for addressing livability issues. They form one of the few formal connections between citizens and local government. At the same time, how these committees operate is subject to scrutiny by local politicians. As such, it is obvious that PAEs assume active support for their position. This position legitimates their work as “process-managers” of local governance. After all, as PAEs claim, they secure transparency in the decision-making procedures of NCs. They also broaden local democracy, as they regularly stimulate the NCs to expand their base by inviting more and diverse fellow neighborhood people.

Recently, their ability to actively engage local residents in the NCs challenged that almost natural sense of legitimacy. One of those challenges is linked to the increased scrutiny of the way local democracy functions. Civil servants, local city councils, and the alderman are critical of their performance. This scrutiny leads to questioning how NCs came to their decisions, and even to overruling some NCs’ decisions. According to PAEs, this situation has seriously scrambled their support in and by the NCs.

In research, there is more attention given to the “thickness” or clustering of local organizations of different kinds around urgent neighborhood issues (Tonkens, 2014). The case of the restructuring of the Karel Doorman Square, in the center of the Landlust neighborhood, is exemplary of this clustering. This is an area primarily dominated by adolescents with a migrant background. Residents find the square unsafe and unattractive. In order to improve the square, the concerned neighborhood committee developed a number of restructuring scenarios. In that process, it also involved coalitions of other active neighborhood people. At the same time, the local neighborhood coordinator – a civil servant, and the members of the Neighborhood Practice Team - also civil servants, came on to hook up with the same active neighborhood people whom the NC had consulted. And they eventually took the lead.

This turnaround has been linked to the strength of the formal and financial mandate that street-level officials bring in as they increasingly have offices in neighborhood centers. These civil servants tend to work as the “eyes and ears” of the local aldermen. Consequently, they have direct links to the local politicians and officials; they can solve complaints of neighborhood people more easily and more quickly. The neighborhood committees lose their unique position as channels to local politics. As a result, people have started to turn their backs on the neighborhood committee as not being effective and responsive. Since the PAEs are seen as facilitators of the NCs, everything that
NCs have been blamed for has been projected onto them. In that sense, they regularly seem to be ‘guilty by association’. Not surprisingly, this discontent with the functioning of the NC has resulted in official complaints against Combiwel, which is hired to support the NCs.

According to one of the PAEs, the public image of Combiwel does not in the least enhance their legitimacy to create engagement at the local level:

“Combiwel is not a community development organization. It doesn’t think about community development, and it doesn’t organize around community development.”

At the time of this writing, it is not clear whether this decrease in support for the role of PAEs in the neighborhood, and the neighborhood committees, is a transient phenomenon. Nevertheless, it signifies that the negative perceptions in the community about Combiwel frustrate their ability to engage local people. Furthermore, the incorporation of community development in a general social services organization, also directly seems to affect their feeling of legitimacy:

Wouter: “What I experience at the moment as very differently is, that there really is a hierarchy. It is actually gone back in time rather than forward in time. I know the time in which I could make arrangements with the residents and that confidence was much larger, there was just budget with what you could get started. Now someone (name CEO) in this case, talking with the alderman and decide together on a certain level of ‘that’s what we’ll do.’ And that comes from two sides: from the local organization of the District, and from our own organization. It lands over many layers and ultimately it (lands) in the workplace. Well, I do not have to explain to you that [then] the message is deformed and that it has nothing to do with what we may or may not have heard in our own environment.”

The next anecdote also illustrates that lack of organizational support. It recalls a complaint, issued by one of the neighborhood committees. Allegedly, one of the PAEs had not been able to acquire the agreed upon neighborhood funds in a timely way. The committee not only issued that complaint about the PAE to the Combiwel management, but it also included the local alderman in the correspondence. However, according to Sonja, the accused PAE, this complaint would not have been made, if Combiwel’s procedures to free the funds had been transparent, let alone if the residents would not have had such a lack of trust:

“They want to have their money very quickly, and the residents’ initiatives apparently do not quite accept that there are structures in which that money is distributed.”

For the PAE in question, this signified an experience of lacking active support, not only from the residents, but also from her own organization:

“Once these funds were controlled by the community foundation. [After the merger with Combiwel, the community members, jm] wanted then again control, and that [procedure, jm] is not what Combiwel is used to follow. So Combiwel said ‘What do you mean, we do not know that foundation at all.’ That was the Administration speaking. The creditor (of the Combiwel’s administration) said, ‘Why should all that money go to that foundation?’”

This anecdote illustrates the associations that PAEs have with the experience, as well as the actual possibility of mutual engagement. The professional captures that engagement in NCs, as well as in voluntary neighborhood activities. Here, the locals become participants. PAEs permanently scan their environment for opportunities to create that mutual engagement. Important venues for this engagement are informal encounters with community members, either during neighborhood activities or just on the street in a play garden or at the community center. People who are active in these
public spaces already appear to provide the PAEs with some professional legitimacy. This is at least how Wilma remembered as she observed two mothers in the play garden in front of a neighborhood chamber:

“One of the Turkish ladies is here on Thursday afternoons. So I know her, and so I know that she can be approached. Also a Moroccan and a Dutch mother were here in the play garden, and so I approached them and said, ‘Wow, this is nice to see you all together here.’ It is just registration, who are they and where do they live.”

Later she would re-approach them. This is part of what can be seen as experiences of active support, in terms of push-and-pull interactions:

Wilma: “Yeah, well, it is a bit of teasing. So if there comes an opportunity that might be of interest for them, I would like to attend this group, and involve them.”

Researcher: “Do you have any idea what they are doing? Because they are here at least today, at the end of the school day. But other days they might be at work.

Wilma: “Yes. Well, they all have little ones, eh. It’s called a group of new mothers from the school. I did not progressed that far. I usually hear the recordings; I put it in my phone. Then I put on that, this and that. If I have to remember someone who has what or who can what, or who has a trick or has a problem, then I put it in my phone.”

Afterwards, Wilma acknowledged that she has become more reticent in her approach toward community members. Rather, she waits for what eventually emerges spontaneously. The possible future engagement of the two mothers is at stake here. She is careful not to be seen as too obtrusive. Here, an awareness of a long-term engagement emerges. This concerns the continuity of her professional involvement. As we will see in the next section, continuity especially requires a firm dose of professional reflexivity on the right course of action.

5.4.3. Control and stability as an expression of continuity

Continuity, or persistence, is, according to legitimacy theory, a significant building block of the legitimacy of social actors. It is said to provide sustainability over time for the actors’ presence, activities and relationships. For the PAEs in Bos en Lommer, the challenge to create a sense of continuity in an era of discontinuity comes as a particular challenge. How to create stability in their local relations?

The strategic dimension (and hence this concern of legitimacy) is exemplified by Wouter’s reflection:

“Our field of work is always about deliberation, when is the best time to score, considering all the agendas into play. It is very hard to grasp, but it is just about doing your job and educating the people that it is possible.

In reflections on the continuity of the PAEs presence, activities and relationships, this strategic concern was strongly associated with a particular strategic, as well as reflective ability: to monitor and manage their own engagement. This focus on the PAEs’ own positions introduces a novelty in their reflections on the make-up of their mandate. Certainly, it is a new perspective, if we consider the previous associations of PAEs with legitimacy. It seems as if recognition and engagement reflect concerns about the other, the environment, the community. Continuity, on the other hand, seems
almost exclusively associated with the professional, and more specifically with the PAEs’ own ability to act. In the reflections about the continuity of their professional presence, “stability” emerged as a dominant theme. Stability is not only what PAEs look for, but it also is a subject for careful observation and consideration, as the quote above illustrates. Stability is also a theme which emerges in normative evaluations (“What should I think about it?”). For instance, this can be seen when Wouter reflects on the leave of a neighborhood committee member:

“Well, indeed he quit. Not because he has trouble with the people, but because he had trouble with the civil servants who were not functioning well enough. And yes, I could not stop this, because it is a neighborhood committee, and well, many people have their stains...”

This reflection implicitly reveals a generally held normative assumption among the PAEs studied. That assumption goes roughly like this: “No matter what happens, I, as a PAE, will be here as a continuous factor.” There is no question that the PAE will ever distance himself from the NC; only members can do that. Indeed, it was a discontented member who left as a result of what he saw as a lack of efficacy of the NC in opposing the local civil servants. Furthermore, it is a consequence of the nature of neighborhood committees; it is a voluntary commitment (“I could not stop this because this is ...”).

Against this voluntary commitment stands the persistence of their professional engagement over time. It is more than a factual assessment. It is connected to a professional norm that has to be sustained. Let us look at the statement of Marjon, another PAE, as she deliberates about how she gives direction to her relationship with the members of a neighborhood committee. For her, continuity is about steadiness or stability:

“Many things are unclear: the rules, the budgets. So, I try to develop a steady role.”

The next quote highlights a different manifestation of that normative deliberation. Although not explicitly stated, it is safe to say that this statement also reflects stability as part of the PAEs’ professional mandate over time. Their commitment transcends temporary issues, but is, on the contrary, concerned with the development process of the community over a long period of time. Overcoming the little conflicts and setbacks is connected to stability.

Marjon: “It is not only your task to let people develop themselves, but it is even a task of the fact that it might sometimes be useful to take a small step back so that others get the opportunity to develop themselves. To assume another role. It is known in the whole of Bos en Lommer that in every neighborhood, dominant figures tend to walk around. You should cherish and value people. But at the same time you have to educate them, and learn them step by step that it might be good to look at the longer term, and make them clear that it is important, also for the whole of the neighborhood, that there are more people with skills and responsibilities. This way, it is more distributed evenly or organized more democratically.”

This quote is highly illustrative for another aspect of stability, one that exceeds the dimension of time. It is the normativity that is found in assertions such as “it is your task” and “it is even important” in the first sentence; as well as the phrase “you have to” in the next-to-last sentence of this quote. These assertions imply an obvious, self-entitled continuous involvement with the community - one that will not easily be made subject to any scrutiny.

On the other hand, scrutiny is indeed required with regard to the commitment and motivation of the local residents. After all, the persistence of their professional engagement depends on it. Hence it is essential that the PAE is able to discern immediate gain over long-term gain. If you want
people to visit a debate on the redesign of a neighborhood square, make sure they feel welcome and offer coffee, cookies and possibly some snacks. As one of the PAE’s during a group discussion stated:

“Creating commitment. Look, it is not about the snacks. I can shop for them at the Albert Heijn in a minute. But it does concern the square.

Of course, for commitment to grow and persist, people have to stay motivated. For Wilma, one of the PAEs working with volunteers, this is an issue. How do you keep the participants involved, after the neighborhood center not only has been closed, but now also funds for small-scale community events have become scarce?

“When we were still a neighborhood center [...], Sonja did lunch with the elderly; Fatima supported the women’s network; and somebody else organized computer courses. It all happened there. Now, I cannot send people there anymore.”

In sum, creating persistence of their professional engagement requires that the PAEs rise above daily incidents and reflectively develop a strategic consciousness. This provides a sort of stability for their presence over time, one that becomes self-evident. However, this does not imply that the local residents with whom they deal on a daily basis acknowledge that entitlement to be present. Their professional added value has to be recognized. This brings us to the fourth and last constituent: how the PAEs define their expertise.

5.4.4. Recognition of PAEs expertise as an expression of credibility

Credibility is the fourth asset that builds their professional mandate. For PAEs, this generally is a matter of being recognized for their expertise. This recognition of expertise stands in contrast to the associations about recognition, which the PAEs had with passive support. There, recognition was linked to being allowed to be present in community affairs. Here, recognition of expertise expresses their need to be taken seriously as a professional. Evidence for this concern was abundant. Paradoxically, it was the recollections of the contrary experiences of “losing face” which brought this concern to the surface. For PAEs, losing the recognition of their professional expertise was a daily concern.

This challenged expertise is associated by the PAEs with a number of recent developments. First of all, they report about dealing with unrealistic expectations from both their employer and the community. These expectations diminish their credibility as they feel unable to meet them. Budgets for community development have been reduced lately. As a consequence, fewer staff are now working on the streets. At the same time, Combivel’s management, as well as the local residents, still expect the same kind of presence from the PAEs, which leads to local people being discontented about the visibility of these professionals on the streets. According to the PAEs, their credibility is at stake as a result.

A second challenge to their expertise is due to their new position in the Social Neighborhood Team. It was unclear at the time of the transition what it meant to integrate their role as a street-level professional into that of a team member. This did more than simply affect their sense of expertise in relation to other team members. It also was unclear how their new job description and label of “Participation and Activation Employee” would resonate in the streets. Moreover, what would be their added value as a professional?
A third, more constant challenge is linked to the “street level” character of community development work. Being on the streets, in the coffee house, or in the community center, PAEs are constantly exposed to gossip, discontent, and frustration. Social interactions are unpredictable and not always beneficial to their credibility.

Analyzing associations of the PAEs with credibility in professional situations revealed two significant aspects: the first referring to external challenges, and the second addressing professional qualities. The external challenges signified changes regarding the constraints of their work mentioned earlier, such as the decreased budget, and their repositioning into a Social Neighborhood Team. Surprisingly, these challenges stimulated reflections about personal qualities.

For instance, one PAE remarked:

“You have to be of special material to be able to do this work [...]”

Upon which a colleague replied:

“You need to be independent, and the people need to be able to trust you. If you just follow [the official rules], you will lose that trust.”

This sense of autonomy/independence has always been a requirement to do community development work. Recent changes in the organization (reshuffling of the teams, budget cuts, multidisciplinary approach), as well as the new political and social policy context (New Style Welfarism) have discredited/challenged that sense of autonomy, and with that, their “expertise.” Tensions arise as community members tend to see PAEs as representatives of local government. Furthermore, current social policy appears to restrict the PAEs’ “rules of engagement” with the community. The latter signifies this dilemma: “OK, we are not civil servants. But if we don’t cash in the mandate provided us by local social policy, what else is our legitimating ‘back up’?” The dominant official lingo of participation and activation is exactly what, historically, has always been part of the professional ideology of community development. Not surprisingly, several PAEs made references to this New Style Welfarism (that formulates active civic participation as the primary goal) as a building block of their professional credibility:

Wouter: “Well, the goal is that people participate in society, in the neighborhood, and that they become able to stand for themselves, and learn how to find their own way. That kind of things.”

Wouter sees this new policy framework as a recognition of traditional community development work. The low degree of trust Combiewel had been able to develop in the community in the days of the field research made the PAEs vulnerable. Active community members not only critique the size of Combiewel and its bureaucratic procedures. They also regularly ventilated about their discontent with the unpredictability of how decisions affecting them were being made. For instance, what the local council decides could differ from what the neighborhood committees want. In the same manner, the actions of the aldermen and their civil servants also could consistently raise local people’s eyebrows. PAEs regularly were held responsible for that lack of congruence. It produced complaints, but also doubts about their expertise: “Isn’t that the role of the PAE, to advocate for us, and resist the people in power? And they cannot even make their own organization function well!”

Marjon, reflecting on her precarious position when trying to align the expectations and politics of the neighborhood committees with the bureaucratic logic of Combiewel observed:

“Even I did not receive enough information from [Combiewel], and that is still so this day, because that is just a weak point of [Combiewel]”
While she later explained how she manages her credibility in the NC:

“It can be in different ways. Like talking about private matters at hand in the lives of specific members of the platform. But also about me trying to follow up on what had been agreed upon, that I keep them up-to-date. Because they had also made statements like, ‘We hear nothing. And the information we get is just too little.’”

But not all PAEs feel as able as Marjon to build credibility. This ability, after all, mirrors the at least precarious trustworthiness of the organization. Some of the PAEs just consider that as a challenge to deal with. Building trust is an urgent matter - or rather rebuilding trust.

The second association of PAEs with credibility refers to exclusivity of their activities. It is not a coincidence that this theme arose. The multidisciplinary Social Neighborhood Teams model urges them to define the added value of their expertise in community development. The alleged “community-orientation” of the SNTs should at least give them some extra credit in the team. However, there is a difference between the policy lingo of community participation, and the nuts and bolts of everyday PAE work with community members. Indeed, in informal talks, PAEs tended to raise doubts about the political and organizational recognition for the exclusivity of their expertise. “Our social case workers think that sitting an afternoon in a neighborhood center is connecting to the community,” Wilma once confessed.

This issue of exclusivity not only was attached to their position in the Social Neighborhood Team. The emergent presence of officials with a mandate from the local alderman also seems to provoke that association with exclusivity. These new style civil servants have been assigned to improve the quality of the community-government relations. “It looks like everybody can do what I do,” Wilma remarked another day, referring to the presence of civil servants during “open house” moments at the community center.

The third and last quality PAEs tend to associate with credibility is independence. Semantically, at first it sounds slightly related to the first association – that of positioning and discretionary space. For instance, this is obvious in their struggle with the earlier sketched interdependence of community politics. Surely, neighborhood committees are a discrete element of community governance.

However, people who are a member of such an NC sometimes also hold an official mandate, such as a local council member. Issues that were discussed during a neighborhood meeting tend to echo the day after in talks between NC members, the local alderman and civil servants. For instance, when a formerly subsidized migrant coffee house is closed, pressure arises for the PAE to find solutions, and then, some of the more experienced PAEs, like P., start using their local relations. They assume a more political role. In such high-profile issues, others, like Wilma, choose to step back. They like to be seen as independent. When Cordaan, an organization for specialized day-care, adopted an existing neighborhood center, Wilma foresaw it would lead to exclusion of the regular visitors, mostly socially isolated, vulnerable people. Instead of becoming engaged, she decided to stay on the sidelines. A consultant was hired to manage the merger. For Wilma, that was an important assurance for her independence.

Wilma: “I do work together with her. But it was a too intense assignment for me, because I got associated with Cordaan. And that is not a good thing.”

In times of crisis and scarcity of community resources, legitimacy issues trend to stick to the visible street-level professionals. Being able to remain impartial seems paramount here.
5.4.5. Summarizing the contextual constituents of professional legitimacy of the Bos en Lommer PAEs

In the previous sections, what the Bos en Lommer PAEs see as the building blocks of their mandate have been explored. Their mandate can be summarized as resting on: (1) Recognition for being a professional: This is rooted in transparent procedures, organizational back up, and fueled by bonding efforts of the PAEs with the local people; (2) Engagement of the local community members: That engagement is based on due procedures, common interests and alignment with community interventions by other local actors; (3) Stability as a deliberative ability of the PAEs. This refers to their ability to secure continuous engagement of the community, even when the PAEs are not always present at activities; (4) Expertise: This is the basis for professional credibility. It is rooted in discretionary space and adoption of an appropriate position in neighborhood politics.

The associations, which PAEs hold about their current mandate, engender a kind of deception. On one side, there is a substantial concern for their legitimacy amidst a number of profound changes, such as the new financial and policy constraints, their newly assigned position, and a change in the make-up of neighborhood governance. On the other hand, some of the reported themes connected with legitimacy might just be linked to community development practice *per se*. Maybe it is just business as usual - the street-level character of their work and the simultaneous linkage to local governance. Anyway, transient or structural challenges to legitimacy have to be dealt with. Whether or not that happens successfully is part of the following section. Here the strategies will be reconstructed; PAEs resort to manage their mandate over time.

![Diagram](image)

*Fig. 5.1. Overview of the contextual constituents of professional legitimacy of the Bos en Lommer PAEs*

5.5. The operational dimension: Strategies of professional legitimation in CheBos en Lommer

So far, the constituents of legitimacy that PAEs require in order to be able to function as professional community workers in Bos en Lommer have been examined. These building blocks of their legitimacy constitute the space to maneuver as a Participation and Activation Employee. This space to maneuver has to be *negotiated*. In the previous section, we already had a glimpse of the volatility of their legitimacy. It is not a stable mandate; rather it is precarious and temporary. How do the PAEs
deal with their somewhat elusive mandate? From a theoretical point of view, we came to consider legitimacy management as an endeavor to tune into the norms and beliefs of the local people. Through that tuning, a shared “symbolic universe” should emerge. This universe contains a number of shared cognitive and normative assessments about what is important in community development matters. Ideally, there is a form of agreement between what local residents want and need, and the professional mission of the PAEs. After all, as professionals they bring their own values and goals to the community table.

In this study, legitimation is treated as a non-conspicuous, yet a conscious deliberated attempt to account for actions. Usually, this is connected to the evolving interests, values and knowledge of the environment. The following legitimation strategies could be reconstructed.

5.5.1. Tapping as legitimation strategy to obtain professional recognition

In section § 5.4.1, we came to see recognition as foundational for PAEs to become engaged with the local community members. PAEs in Bos en Lommer seek recognition for their professional presence. It supports their tasks. The task of being a team member of the Social Neighborhood Team was the least discussed by the respondents to this study. Their balancing efforts as process managers of neighborhood committees were more explicit, as was their supportive role in voluntary neighborhood initiatives and interactions. However, with increasing importance, the PAE also has become enlisted as a mediator. The PAE has to mediate between the “supply” of inactive people receiving social grants and the demand for voluntary community services.

This recognition is linked to several challenges. At the time of research, one of the legitimacy challenges for the PAEs was their unclear position, both in the community and as an employee. For instance, they seek their added professional value through the clarification of bureaucratic procedures. Another challenge was how to create organizational back up for their precarious position amidst unpredictable neighborhood relations. PAEs also try to become recognized for their professional ability to bond with isolated people, or to stimulate voluntary engagement.

When analyzing the PAEs’ reflections and statements on how they manage issues of recognition, a tendency to tap into the local mores emerged. This tapping in refers to their endeavors to connect to the moral interests of the community. No matter how rooted in the local community, the PAE still is an outsider with a professional purpose. The local community, on the other hand, is made up by insiders, no matter how divided their opinions and interests are. How can PAEs “tap in” in order to merge the different perspectives? Or, in terms of Berger and Luckmann (1991), how do the PAEs manage that shared symbolic universe? In general, the PAEs entail bringing structure at the local level. Their focus is on how community people interact. At the same time, this structuring implies a certain outcome. So, PAEs see themselves as negotiators, not only to clarify the benefits of community-level interactions, but also to discern community efforts from professional efforts.

This tapping in demands a cautious approach that balances between earning trust and “keeping face.” As Marjon asks herself:

“What is my role? It [the Neighborhood Committee] is an autonomous group, and I am there to support them.”

Another PAE is aware of possible resistance to giving him recognition among the local residents. Reflecting on his approach to local people to become active in the neighborhood, Wouter acknowledges:
“Well, I can imagine that people are not interested at all in this interfering of community developers and social case workers.”

A third comment sketches the issue of recognition as a transitional phase. This transition refers to the in-between situation of formerly working for a community development organization and presently being staffed at a SNT:

Wilma: “During our transition to ABC [Combiwel, SNT] and working by the logic of New Style Welfar-ism, a way to develop trust emerged. They (neighborhood people, JG) said, ‘Why do we have to do all these things now; we are already doing enough’ (…) Because there are no formal guidelines on how this must function, I explored new ways to work with them.”

These three reflections illustrate quite differently some of the challenges to acquire recognition for their presence as a professional. First of all, it illuminates the form of recognition of their presence as a professional. In addition, it shows how PAEs can assess the likelihood of the local residents engaging in community development processes. And thirdly, these reflections highlight the way that the conditions under which they were assigned influence how the community perceives them.

In other words, PAEs seem to develop recognition by seeking consent. This consent is created by tapping into the mores of the community. Mores (from the Latin mos) are “folkways” that have “become ethical principles, the behaviors considered essential to the welfare of the society. Mores are more coercive than folkways.” Legitimacy theory acknowledges that this moral dimension is reflected in the ethics of the community. These ethics can refer to three aspects of folkways: steps that are to be taken forward (procedures), ways to organize activities (structures), and outcomes or results that the community finds valuable (consequences).

This implies that PAEs recognize that they have to tune into the community’s mores to establish a mandate. By “calibrating” with these local mores, they can develop moral resources for their recognition as a professional.

Doing good. A first element of that tapping in strategy of legitimation is “doing good.” This refers, technically speaking, to the conversion of moral resources, in this case, implying the moral consequences of the PAEs’ actions. The local people can see the presence of the PAEs as bringing morally favorable outcomes. This necessity to “do good” requires that the PAEs deliberate on the veracity of their own assumptions: “Am I right about what I think the local residents value as favorable to the community?” In those deliberations, two types of moral consequences emerge. First of all, there are deliberations about the qualities of the consequences. This concerns issues, such as whether the consequences possess efficacy or whether they possess fairness. Secondly, in the deliberation about “doing good,” practice principles also are considered.

Issues arising in these reflections are about whether the PAEs find they are organizing bonding and bridging connections. PAEs wonder if what they do facilitates developmental processes, but also if they provide a caring environment.

Reflecting on how they could generate recognition, PAEs will first of all refer to the qualities of the consequences. At the same time, they seem to deliberate whether they use the right practice principles. Things must entail a positive, worthwhile effect in terms of what the community finds morally valuable. Efficacy and empowerment are such qualities. These minimally hold the promise that the PAE has a meaningful contribution to make to the realization of the community’s aspirations.

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8 http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392134/mores
So far, these are the abstractions. What are the practice principles that PAEs see as a tool to acquire recognition? A first one that comes forward in the reflections is “making connections.” Almost effortlessly, it seems, PAEs listen and connect during informal talks on the street, after a Financial Administration Salon (a self-help group for people with debts), or at the playground. PAEs “hear” things and they make notes about what they hear. A spontaneous conversation with an unemployed guitar teacher looking for something to do might come in handy, for instance, when someone is needed to animate a group of children on a Wednesday afternoon in the community center.

This connecting taps into the need of community members who want to become more engaged in neighborhood based social networks. But this connecting seems more than a pure instrumental effort. It is not just a simple transaction linking “supply and demand.”. There is also a moral dimension attached to connecting people. A reflection of Wilma illustrates that morality. One day, she explained how she showed a woman with a mild form of agoraphobia the way to Kijkduin, a specialized neighborhood day care center. She later informed the woman that the professionals took good care of people there. “I need reassurance that if I let somebody decide to have a cup of coffee at Kijkduin, that that person will be well looked after.” (my italics, jg)

But what are these morally good consequences? They are simply creating a more caring environment. PAEs regularly reported that they see themselves as guardians of a more human, tolerant, public space. According to one of the PAEs, personal attention and care can “mean doing good” for a person:

“You see how people blossom up. You see how people suddenly begin to walk with their back straight and their chest forward, thinking, ‘I am going to bake cakes now.’ Then people are happy. Hundreds of these people have come to bake cakes. And they are excited and they are happy.”

So, providing a caring environment is the first moral practice principle. A second “moral” practice principle arising in the reflections is the principle of development. This principle was mentioned in different variations. Formulations of developmental principles came forward as: increasing involvement in the neighborhood, stimulating personal growth, and enhancing community autonomy. Frequently, it is a mix of foreshadowed consequences that, according to PAEs, provide a moral foundation for their presence. As one PAE stated during a focus group meeting, “There are different goals in having a party. It is the roundup of a nice time, but it is also an instrument for appropriation of the initiative by the community itself.”

As a result of above exploration, one might argue about these are moral consequences. Are they really moral? Or are these considerations not just transactional, instrumental, or pragmatic in their kind? Is this not merely a justification for their presence? Indeed, tapping in is pragmatic. Put even more strongly, it is strategic. Moral and pragmatic resources for legitimation indeed differ. This will become clear when the pragmatic resources in legitimation are explored. Moral consequences are moral insofar as what we have seen; they deal with welfare of the community as a whole, not with mere self-interest of individuals or communities. In addition, PAEs consider these moral consequences not as an end in themselves (instrumental), but on the contrary, they also are a means to build a community out of sometimes isolated individuals.

Doing right. A second aspect of the “tapping in” strategy is ‘Doing right. It differs from doing good, since doing right not only refers to specific moral consequences, but also to moral procedures. For instance, PAEs in Bos en Lommer report on procedural moral resources that signify the use of “rightful” or “due” procedures in decision-making. But due procedures also have to be applied in the organization of neighborhood events. PAEs view themselves as guardians of due procedures. They
guard the community governance and also oversee informal community codes. Neighborhood committees, for instance, have to function according to formal procedures on decision-making and accountability, such as the funding of community activities. Informal procedures refer to implicit codes of conduct, the local mores, but also the professional ones. “Doing right” is the strategy of fusing the two. Bart provides an example of this strategy. Remembering an NC in another city, he recounts:

“There was a neighborhood committee with a chairman that did not have a good reputation. Meetings were, well, more or less held hostage by him. The government raised at some point the question of legitimacy: ‘Are you able to govern this district well enough?’ Then I thought up of a plan, and it worked out well. I proposed: ‘You know what, let’s go with a tent into the neighborhood.’ So we started holding our meetings not behind a table with the president, treasurer, and the hall over there. But we went with a tent into the neighborhood, close to the people. And it was funny because (...) because the situation was different, their power was gone. The space was also different; the board could not hide anymore. That worked out well both ways: We found new people to become active and those who were in the government learned of the situation and were milder and could take more distance of the local governance process.”

This reflection exemplifies “doing right” as a strategy to acquire professional recognition. Firstly, it shows how Bart felt an issue of legitimacy arising. He had to intervene professionally, but for that, he had to secure the NC’s recognition of his professional mandate. Secondly, the political legitimacy of the neighborhood committee was under scrutiny. Its procedures were seen as fuzzy, due to the way it was led by the chairman. The NC also lacked community legitimacy, as there was too much an inner circle runnign it. However, it was also paramount that Bart would not openly challenge the already plagued chairman, let alone the committee as a whole. Instead, Bart proposed a new procedure, which did not require the chairman to openly change the way he chaired meetings. On the contrary, he used the existing pressure on the chairman as leverage to introduce, or re-introduce, “due” procedures of neighborhood committees. Going into the neighborhood enabled inviting new members, thereby broadening the power base of the committee.

Also, when making more informal local contacts, PAEs are aware of the fact that the recognition depends on doing right. The following reflection exemplifies this. During a group discussion, one of the PAEs explored the professional principles underlying her approach. She brought in a case of a socially isolated woman, who sought contact with her. During a first meeting with this woman, the PAE approached her in two ways, the first one making:

“... the inventory on what is possible, seeking opportunities. The other is towards respect and feelings of satisfaction and create equality to that lady, and that lady should do this herself, within her own environment.”

These examples, the one about the displaced NC-meeting, and the one about the socially isolated woman, illustrate how PAEs use deliberation to discern “right procedures.” Technically, the PAEs make situational value judgments. These concern what is the right thing to do. Both examples also illustrate the references PAEs make to the wider social context, which their actions might impact. This exemplifies the manner in which PAEs convert moral resources (“the right thing to do given the context”) into legitimacy. After all, for them, it is their ability to make these judgment calls, which provides them with a professional mandate. That ability to “do right” (as is the ability to “do good”) is their (professional) contribution to the community. It is shown by the search for a literally (and also figuratively) new ground for the NC without publicly challenging the position of the chairman. In the second example, a PAE seeks recognition of her professional role by assuming a facilitating position.
As a person, she almost fades away. As a professional, she brings in an approach of openness and valuation.

Co-creation. So far, we have seen how PAEs convert local mores about what are good ends (consequences) and what are good ways of doing things (procedures) into resources for their recognition as a professional. However, there was another third type of local moral resources that emerged in the reflections. This was labeled as “co-creation.” Co-creation is a horizontal form of collaboration, which merits mutual efforts. In a similar manner, PAEs structure their interactions with the local residents. Hence, co-creation is a strategy whereby PAEs acknowledge community practices as valuable. This is managing a strategic “double agenda,” that cannot be taken lightly. On one side, is the need to work on the commitment of the community in order to work with them as professionals. On the other side, is their added value to broaden the cooperation between local people on livability issues.

Indeed, the development and maintenance of professional recognition is a demanding task. The perception to be developed here must be to be one of the “good folks,” but one with a professional purpose. That is, being present amidst active community members means more than just being a good listener, or being part of the public; it means acting as a professional in such a way that it resonates with the local residents and their mores. Hereby, both the PAE and the community members will have to merit each other’s contribution to community activities.

PAEs show awareness of this challenge. They acknowledge the need to demonstrate that they are trustworthy. In order to create that trustworthiness, they make use of co-creation processes, a direct action by which a kind of level-playing field is created. Here, community members negotiate, as well as act, on their own behalf. PAEs’ ability to accommodate that search for autonomy grants them recognition. Embedding in the local mores and the support of community self-regulation seems to go together well. In this section, we saw that the strategy to gain and sustain recognition requires the merger of two things. The community members’ search for development, growth, and recognition has to fuse with the professional mission to support that search. Those are the ingredients to create a shared symbolic universe that includes the PAEs in community issues. However, a complimentary layer of shared meanings has to be created in order to let that symbolic universe make room for a more active mutual engagement.

5.5.2. Accommodation as legitimation strategy to obtain engagement

In the experience of the PAE, active support is an “amplified” form of professional legitimacy. However, passive support – recognition, and active support – engagement, are not mutually exclusive ingredients of support. Moreover, the passive-active support distinction also is not a continuum. On the contrary, it does not range from low to high support. Reflecting on situations of engagement, PAEs tend to think that if they engage the local residents, their professional presence is subsumed. So perhaps, it is best to consider the active-passive support distinction in terms of “layers.” These layers are what compose community support for the presence and efforts of the PAE.

Looking at the general features of the strategy to arrange engagement, first of all pragmatic resources in the environment seem more evident than moral resources. Self-interest, influence, and a positive assessment of the PAE’s character appear to fuel active support in the form of mutual engagement. It seems that by making appeals to these more pragmatic interests, PAEs attempt to convince local residents to become engaged. This can be summarized as a supportive, accommodating
strategy. It is not about local morals, but about facilitating engagement. This is a general feature to arrange support, which can be discerned in the different approaches.

**Installing.** One of the techniques of accommodation emerging from the data, is installing, which refers to a conscious attempt of PAEs to grant influence, or voice, to community members on how they want to bring plans forward. Part of this is exploring what it means to be, or become, a stakeholder in a community development effort. Sometimes, this means breaking with routines. For instance, Wouter recalls how he tried to provoke that during a Neighborhood Committee:

“... I did it in a very simple manner. I did not send [the agenda and minutes jg] in advance, so that no one could prepare the meeting. I've copied [the agenda and minutes, jg] a number of times, four times or something. And I thought I'll just let them rotate in groups of two / three around the piles of paper we had made. The idea was to organize a kind of consultative round where [people could make decisions about propositions as, jg]: ‘Yes,” ‘Yes, if,’ ‘No, provided that,’ or just plain ”No.’ But each plan had to be supported by four names. Ultimately, this did not succeed. A discussion took place; the first question had to be completely technically sound.”

In other words, experiments to stimulate people to become more actively involved in decision-making do not always immediately succeed. The inclination of participants to just stick to the usual, formal way of dealing with things sometimes tends to prevail. Also Wilma, another PAE, explained how she would ”hook” people to actively pursue an idea. In this case, it involved a man who wanted to build a music studio in the community center.

“I initially want to guide the resident with his way in, and yes, also with his question; how it could become part of the (local, jg) society. (....) I will then say, ‘Please sir, run home. And make sure that you have two friends who are also going to join you, and then come back again.’”

This deliberation illustrates a rather directive intervention from Wilma. She was looking for ways to link his individual ambition with the larger community. She explicitly suggests that the man should expand the number of participants: “Bring more people with you.” Usually, this form of installing stakeholdership requires several meetings, explained another PAE in response.Fueling that individual engagement in a community setting also requires that ambitions are reframed into a developmental perspective. The following discussion that emerged in the focus group meeting, is very illustrative for this search to reframe individual ambitions, in this case in a community development framework:

**PAE 1:** “It’s not about one conversation, it is about several times contact. And indeed because it is something new,(I would advise, jg) start smaller.”

**Wilma:** “Well. I also said, ‘I think you have to choose a little bit of a chairmanship role and really should stay out of decisions and really just that you organize a bit.’”

**Another PAE:** “Yeah, but you’re the one who conducts the conversation with him, you know?”

Wilma: (reminding what she told the man) “Yeah, well, that you can take the role of chairman. Then you are not in charge, you’re just the person leading the conversation, so to speak.”

This exchange between the PAEs during a focus group meeting, reflects their tentative search for integration, or a further installment of individual plans within a community and community development context. The ambitions of the man with a music studio were not just assessed on their own terms. That is not the type of influence PAEs are seeking to grant. It is an engaging type of influence. It has to open doors to engagement with the larger community. Otherwise, the PAEs would be
no more than just a broker between supply and demand of community ambitions. But in order to install the man’s ambition as a form of community engagement, the intrinsic and initial motivation must be kept alive.

What is it that makes this installing a form of legitimation? Is this not just what community development professionals are supposed to do? Creating voice, framing concrete local individual ambitions into a community development effort? Well, in essence legitimation is nothing more than making sure the PAE is able to do the things a community development professional normally does. By installing, as a form of accommodation, the PAE “manages” that. He creates a shared, or common, “symbolic” universe for the local residents and himself. Here, cognitive and moral interpretations of the PAE (“it must be more than the individual, and it must be development-oriented”) fuse with that of the individual or collective ambition (“this is what I want”). The PAE enables that fusing of ambitions in a community development framework by allowing the local community members to become stakeholders of their own environment. They are welcome to install themselves in that space. They are invited to fill that community-development space with their own ambitions, plans, and (new) routines.

**Rewarding.** A second technique of the accommodation strategy is providing rewards. This element tended to be slightly dominant in the reflections. It refers to the use of “exchange resources” in order to enable engagement. It appeals to the “What is in it for me” (WIIFM) interest of people. Just as with installing, rewarding entails a search to reframe the interest of local individuals into a shared community development effort. PAEs can support that search by providing resources. They look for funds, facilities, and networks in the neighborhood. But rewarding also refers to bringing in the **personal touch.** Wouter, for instance, tends to sometimes take active neighborhood people to a have a meal in the neighborhood pub:

> “And [they] need something, a little pampering too. We love to go and eat before the neighborhood committee starts. That I simply charge afterwards [on Combiwel’s account, jg]. He lives on social benefits, you know. So, for that matter is to establish a little spoiling…”

PAEs dealing with volunteers, invest a lot of time and energy in localizing personal interests. Once detected, they try to transform these interests into a more collective, “civic” engagement. How does that transformation work? Sonja illustrates this during a focus group meeting:

> (...) It grows in such a conversation. (...) [Y]ou think that there is feeling for and then ask; ‘Do you want to organize it?’ And some people can do (...), and some cannot. Sometimes this is the first time, for others [it is] not. So ultimately, you’re spending so much time before anything is accomplished. Ultimately, it is a very good result because you have done it together. But pooh! What a lot of your time it took!”

However, resources for rewarding are limited. There is the recent closing of neighborhood centers, decreasing the options of PAEs to offer facilities. Cuts in funds for community initiatives also limit giving small incentives for locals. Several remarks point to the downward effects of the austerity measures on community mobilization. At the same time, rewarding is more than appealing to the material needs of people. Elementary in rewarding, is also the management of expectations. Making things knowledgeable can strengthen engagement. A PAE, coaching a possible volunteer who wants to give music lessons, remarks:

> “It was beautiful what happened. Expectations were raised, but were not made explicit. Except only in his mind. So, that is why I had to guide him [from point A] to point B.”
That tuning into what people find rewarding, while simultaneously checking the reality of expectations, is a long-term process:

Wouter; “I shall try to win trust with those people there initially. And explain what we can and what we can’t and why we cannot. If there is no trust as basis, then what is the consequence if we don’t work together?

Fostering. A third element of the accommodation strategy is fostering. Fostering entails the creation of a safe environment, a shelter. The PAEs consider themselves as the ones who foster initiatives and people. The display of character is fundamental here. After all, fostering represents being a person who can make people grow and develop. Therefore, they have to be open-minded, but also authentic. At the same time, they have to be impartial. Other qualities, that PAEs associate with fostering, include efficacy and resilience. However, more professional virtues also are mentioned, such as informal leadership and sensitivity to the contexts in which people live. All in all, the PAEs consider their personal characteristics to be of more value than a strict professional approach. In other words, as far as the PAEs are concerned, the display of personal character is essential, and professional characteristics, only to a lesser degree Marjon’s explanation of her approach is illustrative for this valuing of the personal over the professional. She fosters engagement by focusing on the interactions in a local neighborhood platform.

“Well, they find it hard to get along. I consider, ‘Well, that person could take over the coordination,’ [But] I see too much jealousy in the platform. [So] I think there should be one neutral person that takes care of the meeting, that there is an agenda, and that not always the same issues are discussed.”

Marjon undeniably refers to her fostering role in the platform. She accounts for her persistent presence, resilience, and her ability to oversee and manage the social dynamics in the group.

Wilma, reflecting on her colleague’s endurance in keeping in touch with community members:

“Yes, she makes time [for them], and there must be results. For instance, [S] wants to engage neighborhood people, and as they come to her, a social legal professional does not need to stand in between them by saying: ‘I will go and sit at the community center a morning once a week.’ No, she will really need to actively talk with them; she must come to terms with [the community members].”

Challenges to their ability to foster the engagement of the locals residents are, in contrast, linked to “negative virtues.” Most of the time, these are associated with their employer, Combiwel. For instance, the lengthy procedures to acquire community budgets, and the time registration of their activities, overshadow their commitments to the local people. Another challenge is their required adherence to the written and unwritten rules-of-conduct of neighborhood committees. This risks that other initiatives from the community will be excluded. As one PAE admits during a focus group meeting:

“Right now, I’m especially thinking of the community meeting tonight. Because that’s the place where residents will be debating submitted initiatives: ‘Why does this and that one costs so much? Why can that not be done for free?’ That is very challenging. There is another budget that still can be put away. So on the one hand, I think of the money is well spent; so I have done my work well, officially. However, there are also things that wouldn’t have cost any money that actually costs money. So that will become an awkward evening, I think.”
This account reflects the accommodating, subjunctive role of the professional in instances of formal civic engagement. It is the platform that decides.

In sum, in the reflections of the PAEs on engagement, legitimation is sought through providing comfort and structure. Individual and collective ambitions have to find a place in the neighborhood – as a form of civic activity. This invites local community members into a shared effort to install that civic initiative locally. It requires a quest for a common understanding of the goals and the steps to take. This quest lifts an individual ambition up to a community-developing effort. A second element of the accommodation strategy is rewarding these efforts by material means, such as money, facilities and networks. The personal touch appears to be essential here. The PAEs legitimate their efforts by adopting a fostering role. Personal virtues are seen as fundamental here. Pragmatic considerations function here as conversion factors in the process of legitimation, but also need cognitive structuring. It supports the PAEs’ professional mandate to accommodate local voluntary engagement.

5.5.3. Regulating as legitimation strategy to obtain control and stability

In § 5.4.3 was considered how PAEs associate continuity with the stability of processes and their position in the community. While communities’ relationships evolve over time, the PAEs have to be persistent as well as adaptive to the dynamics in their environment. Deliberation is essential in order to decide how to behave in the midst of local dynamics, such as quarrels, conflicts, and various loyalties. The use of pragmatic – and to a lesser degree, moral and cognitive, legitimating resources especially prevails during reflections on how they can ensure a stable mandate. In other words, the PAEs try here to derive stability in their mandate by being of use. Not only do they have to be of use practically, such as by providing funds or facilities, but how the environment valuates the PAE as a person also seems to be important as an indicator for their acceptance. Furthermore, their ability to explicitly integrate the concerns of local people in the account of their own actions is also eminent in their reflections.

These three types of considerations (use, character, influence) not only reflect the use of predominantly pragmatic resources as part of the strategy to regulate the stability of their professional position. Remarkably, the three considerations also reveal something else: a kind of gradual dimension in that regulating strategy. That dimension ranges from prominence towards relative absence of what the PAEs consider as their professional raison d’être. So what they see as their added value as professionals, simultaneously seems to regulate their efforts to create a stable presence. “As long as I am useful, I can be here.” How do the PAEs reflect on their value for the community, so that community members keep on accepting them in their midst? Given the fact that there regularly are incidents between community people, and that the involvement of civil servants is also not always appreciated, their mandate is at risk. A number of elements emerge:

**Positioning.** The first element of that regulating strategy is positioning. Positioning refers to the PAEs inclination to calibrate with the social dynamics in the local context. This focus is on how people relate to each other, whether they agree or disagree. This positioning has pragmatic but also moral features: PAEs must show they are trustworthy, but also are acting according to the right procedures. For instance, as one PAE remarks:

“You will always back up the neighborhood people. If by way of speech someone [official] says, ‘We will take care of that’: ‘We will solve this’; then it is up to me to make sure that does happen. Together with the people who asked for it... So I will always support the neighborhood people, and always keep talking to them.”
This reflection exemplifies both the pragmatic, as well as the moral, ground for her positioning. “You will always back up the neighborhood people,” has moral connotations concerning the right procedure the PAE should follow. On the other hand, the utterance, “then it is up to me to make sure that does happen,” has pragmatic connotations (“I am of use”). Backing up and following what the officials do with requests of the local people, helps position the PAE right into the center of the neighborhood-local government interactions. This position is that of the guardian of continuity. Legal, but also normative, considerations seem to guide their positioning. For instance, a PAE deals with a disruptive member of an NC, rather than to exclude him or her. Another PAE will persist with the follow-up of plans of the NC during the holiday season, even without consulting the members, as long as it meets the legal procedural requirements. Consequently, Wilma, who has been challenged by some of the members of her NC, has a tough time in managing the stability of her mandate. She has to face the discontent of the members, but also needs to win back her mandate by persisting in her role as PAE. Amidst these tensions, she acknowledges:

“Like yesterday afternoon, I just had to be there during the consultation hour, and then everybody is sitting there.... Alright.... And then, I have the feeling that I have to explain myself to them with the utmost consideration, while I also think: If you don’t want it this way, why bother?”

Facing resistance from the people you are meant to support can be cumbersome. In the face of rebelling constituents, it can be hard to maintain a professional position. At moments like these, a more pragmatic strategy is appropriate to deal with the tensions with the neighborhood. For Wilma, her problem with the NC was not the only conflict situation. She recently also was confronted with an angry group of female volunteers who wanted to start a cooking activity. This group expected community funding for buying groceries. Wilma had to question that request, due to new restrictions in the funding of community activities. Why couldn’t the women bring their own ingredients for the cooking? Feeling under attack from different directions, she asked Wouter, her experienced colleague, to assist her. Reflecting on how to restore a position of stability, Wouter made a strong point for leveling. Here, the mandate can be restored by sharing ideas, clarifying the direction, and consequently appealing to self-interest:

“Well, you have to find the people supporting you, and you can scan that beforehand. Like I said, ‘Listen, this is what we are going to do. This has to continue; it is great if that happens. You find that too, don’t you?”

Pragmatic, as well as cognitive, resources also can be distinguished in Marjon’s reflection on how she creates a stable mandate. Considering her strategy towards the NC, she says:

“I provide the information and determine the agenda for that day. I do try to strengthen my role, in the whole of uncertainty, huh. Because the platform (members, jg) cannot properly deal with each other. I do try to strengthen my role in that way.”

Q: “So you could say you’re looking for, unconsciously, [where] you can be complementary. Is that it?”

Marjon: “No, it’s ... How should I say. I try really, the platform is not stable ... These are uncertain times. (...) I quite determine the meeting. That’s my way, what do you call it...?”

Q: “To be there as a professional?”

Marjon: “Well, that too. But I have a clear role. For the rest is vague and there I can be very clear.”

This Q & A with Marjon illustrates the possible legitimating resources for how PAEs might claim a stable, persistent, visible role in the community. As pragmatic resources, disposition can account
for stability, as when Marjon refers to her stable character in an unstable platform (NC), full of “uncertainty.” But she also appeals to the self-interest of the NC members. Marjon assumes that the members need someone who sets up the agenda, and by doing so, she takes a “clear role.” In positioning herself as a stable, clarifying, overlooking actor, Marjon also draws from her cognitive professional capital. In focus groups, several other cases came on the table revealing this leveling aspect. For instance, guiding potential volunteers through the procedures for assignment requires a lot of explanation of the rules. Facilitating a neighborhood initiative to organize a party entails regulating different expectations of local residents, clarifying how to ask for official permission, perhaps even funding. Leveling is an important, though vulnerable, element in regulating, since PAEs can be misunderstood easily. Wilma, for instance, recalled how a group of women expected her to immediately find funding for their cooking initiative. As she explained her doubt whether she indeed could, the women became impatient. This was due to some gossiping about her professional capacities. Nevertheless, at that moment, she resisted the group’s pressure by explaining the procedures and requesting a few days to make inquiries.

This form of leveling can be seen as part of the regulating strategy to obtain a stable mandate amidst the sometimes exaggerated or unfounded expectations of local people, and the unpredictability of their social interactions. Here, the PAE noticeably distances herself or himself from the neighborhood people, but also from the organizational and policy structures of Bos en Lommer. At the same time, she stays aligned with their wishes and needs for clarity. However, this leveling is less explicit than positioning, the first element of the regulating strategy. After all, with positioning, the PAEs legitimize their regulating role in the community (relations and processes) by also accounting for their normative task. This normative task accentuates the ‘I’ of the professional from the “they” of the community. For instance, by referring to the follow-up if the alderman appropriately follows the NC consultations, the PAE accounts for an exclusive, regulating role. That role is prompted by the normative consideration to guard “due course” in neighborhood governance. Leveling, in contrast, entails a more horizontal form of legitimation, where PAEs do not explicitly point to a normative or moral base for their professional mandate. Indeed, here they might find themselves “of use,” as a stable factor, assuring meetings can take place, and making sure that funding for group activities can be acquired.

Associating. The associating position is even more pragmatic than assuming a “leveling” position in the community. This third aspect of the regulating strategy refers to the acquisition of an almost horizontal relationship with the local residents. It is what Sennett (2012) calls “subjunctive” on the basis of his observation of the collaborative modus community organizers in Chicago tended to assume towards community members. He noticed the “inviting” language, such as “Let us talk…”, and phrases such as “What is on your mind?” or “What should we talk about today?”. It is a facilitating style of communication that stimulates community people to explore their immediate concerns. In the reflections of the PAEs, this inviting tendency also became apparent. For instance, this can be seen in the reactions of the aforementioned group of “impatient” women who wanted to start a cooking group. Wilma reported about a significant characteristic of some of the reflections on the incident, which is the relative absence of professional legitimations. Illustrative for this associating is the quote below. It contrasts the considerations about their professional added value, based on professional norms (such as in positioning), but also their added value, based on knowledge (such as in leveling). Listen to how a colleague responded to Wilma’s decision to postpone her answer about the availability of funding: for the cooking activities:
“Well, you created space to find a solution. By saying, ‘I will be back on this in two, three days’, you had three days to consider all parties who need to cooperate in this. Not taking a decision immediately, but creating space to find a solution together”

This reflection signifies another tendency of PAEs to regulate a stable presence in the community. This refers to the tendency to consider the local people as being associates. This associating is the penultimate form of non-conspicuously regulating stable commitments between the PAE and the local residents. Treating them as their counterparts legitimizes their continuous presence (as conspicuous as the community people). Simultaneously, it accentuates the engagement of the community people. For instance, see how Wouter reflects on his efforts to make a group of people associates. He tried to bring predominantly first generation migrants together to explore new ways of building local relationships. Thinking about how he could do that he says:

“There are very nice ways to bring men and women together and see what you can do with them. (....) Why are men always in the kitchen and the women in the living room, or the other way around? Why don’t you move on together? It would better for the neighborhood and the family and everything if you would do things more together. This is more than anticipation or emancipation. Eventually... because there was a lot going on in the building... they were pointing towards each other. As long as people do not take that responsibility, you can only say, ‘He does not do this’ or ‘She does not want to.’

The invitational approach is another aspect that is highlighted in this quote. Bart does not consider himself a stakeholder: He is present but he is not prominent. He is suggesting, drawing attention to possibilities, but not organizing it. This is the way he legitimizes longitudinal presence.

In sum, it is by regulating, in terms of positioning, creating associations, and by leveling with the local residents, that the PAEs seem to create a stable mandate over time. Meanwhile, their presence requires more than just the ability to be there over time. Their contribution has to be valued as well. The local community members have to acknowledge the PAEs for their expertise. How the PAEs extract that affirmation of their expertise, is the subject of the next section.

5.5.4. Modeling as legitimation strategy to obtain recognition of expertise

In § 5.4.4, we have explored the need for PAEs to derive recognition from the community for their professional expertise. At first sight, this sounds similar to recognition, the first building block of their professional mandate. However, there is a subtle but decisive difference between the two. Indeed, the latter express legitimacy in terms of the nature of mutual involvement. Recognition of expertise expresses the valuation of that professional involvement. Evidently, recognition of expertise is not something that is established spontaneously. It has to become tangible. What strategies do PAEs apply to provoke that recognition by the community?

Whether or not PAEs are able to establish recognition for their expertise, depends on a number of conditions. The professionals in Bos en Lommer mentioned, for instance, that the new policy framework seems to increase their professional value in the community. After all, the Participation Law tries to galvanize the role of the community to address and deal with local concerns. At the same time, that added value challenges the Social Neighborhood Team as a model for social intervention. After all, the integrative community approach by the SNT threatens to diminish their formerly exclusive position as guardian of the communities’ well-being. In the current setting of the weekly Round Tables, every professional potentially has a say about community issues. The social
legal workers, the social workers, and the family and youth coaches are all entitled to contribute to the deliberations on how to approach urgent community matters. Especially, this is the case with the emerging connection between labor market activation policy and community services, the latter a formerly exclusive domain of the community development professionals. PAEs speculated on the new type of community client: the unemployed individual who has to do mandatory community services (add references). In addition, the adoption of a more collective approach in social work knits traditional community practice models into mandatory social work. Financial salons exemplify that integration. Part of debt relief, for instance, requires a mandatory course on financial health, based on the philosophy of collective self-help. PAEs guide those salons together with social legal professionals.

This can be seen as subtle process of “de-specialization” of community development work. But despite, or perhaps even as a result of, these emerging new integrative community approaches, PEAseem to look for affirmation or possible reaffirmation off their expertise. Interestingly, feelings of defeat do not seem to dominate that quest. On the contrary, during the focus group meetings, active explorations expressing a sense of professional entitlement were evident. How could this community orientation contribute to an acknowledgement of their expertise by active local people? In other words, in terms of expertise, what resources for legitimation do the PAEs use to deliberate on their changing role in the community? A dominant, discursive strategy emerging from their reflections is that of modeling. Modeling refers to the way that PAEs seek to create a shared narrative with local residents. This strategy seems to rest on a number of assumptions about the relevance of their professional expertise, the first of which is exemplifies an ideal form of “governmentality” and civility in community relationships. The second assumption is that PAEs’ are able to utilize a supportive and diplomatic approach that brings in novel model behavior to deal with conflicts. The third assumption underlying the modeling strategy is that sanctioning behavior could legitimize their expertise.

Exemplifying. The first element of the modeling strategy is exemplifying, which refers to the development of a professional mandate, based on staging an “ideal-type” of street level governance. This is done in different “disguises.” First of all, PAEs seem to attempt to embody an ideal role of intermediary between institutional worlds and street life. PAEs draw here on their assessments of the best and the worst of what community people have experienced, and what they expect the local government, as well as the social services provider, to do. During the focus group meetings and in interviews, reflections on this govern-mentality (“the governmental attitude”) pointed to specific expertise. This ranges from being predictable and trustworthy, to being approachable and impartial. The Bos en Lommer PAEs try to exemplify these qualities as part of the strategy to acquire recognition when handling issues arising in the NCs. For instance, P. recognized that the Bos en Lommer community had lately been confronted with profound changes. The dismantling of existing community support services resulted in the closing of most of the neighborhood centers. Besides that, the PAEs’ professional presence also had been reduced. Marjon, another PAE, looking back, affirms the impact of those recent changes. Consequently, she considers it important to guarantee that people have time to adjust to the new circumstances. This also is the case for the members of the NC. These active citizens were used to support from the PAEs, such as taking the minutes and providing the funds for neighborhood initiatives. The sentiment is that, “It was not the NC who requested this change in community governance.” Additionally, this transition not only took time to learn about and adjust to, but there also were a lot of the procedures which were still unclear during the field research:

Wilma: “Nowhere [ is it] on paper what you can and what you cannot do in such a platform. I think that should also grow. There is already a lot of (...) change and that takes time.”
Supportive diplomacy. Supportive diplomacy is the second technique of modeling. It depicts the expertise PAEs see as defining their added value at the local level. This entails being supportive towards getting neighborhood people to be socially engaged. But at the same time, they are diplomatic towards the people who are already active in the community. For instance, when people request financial support for a neighborhood party, PAEs agree that they will tacitly explore the possibility to negotiate with the local residents. What existing locality could host the party? Simultaneously, they explore whether the “private” wishes of this local community can be transformed into more “public” needs. How to broaden this initiative? This supportive diplomacy is “embedded” in a specific local discourse on what community engagement entails and how the PAE can support this engagement. Technically speaking, in order for the PAEs to model this engagement as a professional, the community must be invited to see, accept, and adopt a number of moral ground rules.

One type of moral ground rules, concerns procedures (procedural moral resources). In other words, PAEs have to show how their professional routines represent a model for community interactions. Based on their reflections, a combination of ethical and practice principles emerged that best can be summarized in terms of supportive diplomacy.

This supportive diplomacy becomes manifest, first of all in their role in the neighborhood committees. Indeed, being a diplomat means deescalating possible conflicts in an informal manner. It requires social skillfulness and strategic insight, especially when the professional himself is the target of discontent. During my field research in Bos en Lommer, one of the neighborhood committees issued a complaint against the PAE in-charge. The NC was unhappy about the lack of transparency with regard to how community funds were distributed. Clearly, this discontent was fueled by the presence of Combiwel in the neighborhood. Both the local alderman and the CEO of Combiwel were included in the correspondence. One of the fellow PAEs, a very experienced community organizer, was recruited to intervene in the conflict. According to the PAE under fire, a number of sessions were held in which the discontent was explored and redirected in a more productive mode:

“How we can strengthen each other in the neighborhood. So yes, little by little they started to realize: the threat that we first thought they were, that might not be the case. We can also be of value and we need to look at where we can produce value. But it takes time and because we are professionals, we have to be prepared to swallow a lot of arguments.” This last sentence also highlights how diplomacy and a supportive approach work together. The PAE is not a stakeholder in the conflict, but rather an engaged “outsider.” He or she stands for due course in community engagement. Hence, those who complained in this example were not treated as opponents in a procedural struggle. On the contrary, the PAEs recognized and validated their concerns about how the establishment of Combiwel in the neighborhood would work out.

Without a doubt, this diplomatic attitude towards the complainers can account for the success of the intervention. Yet, this supportive touch was underpinned by the legitimation process, which created a new space for action. Here the community leaders could develop a new routine, one they saw fit to replace the old routine of adversity. The ability of the PAE to let that new space emerge might have flipped the coin to the right side. The PAE regained recognition as a professional. Being able to integrate adversary arguments in a new, due course is part of the strategic capital of the PAE.

Abstractly stated, in the dialogue with the NC-members, a new symbolic universe was developed. In that universe, professional cognitive and normative ground rules for due course in community interactions started to be mixed with the adversarial tactics and recognition-seeking strategies of some of the NC-members. The professional concern, and the guidelines, for a well-functioning neighborhood committee, merged with the search for justice by its members.
The above incident also highlights something else. It illustrates the professional ability to cash resistance. Insults, insinuations, and distrust are all aspects that confront PAEs in their daily work interacting with the civil, as well as the not-so-civil, local residents they have to face.

Supportive diplomacy is applied, not only in semi-formal settings such as neighborhood committees, but also in more informal settings, like playgrounds. Marjon, showed me how that works and later explained it to me. One day, we were together observing how two mothers and some children gathered at the playground in front of the neighborhood center. Suddenly, she left, and I saw her outside. She welcomed the mothers, exchanged a few words, and a bit later, pointed to the children, who were on bikes. Later, she informed me:

“I talked to one of the mothers over there, ‘How, great that those children take their bikes to the playground, but it might not be such a good idea, because the other children might think that they can ride their own bikes here.”

Sanctioning. Listening to Wilma, another technique of modeling also comes forward, one that entails endorsing the rules-of-conduct in public spaces. This is more cognitive and shows itself in Marjon’s explanation about the playground rules: No bikes allowed. Here, her professional presence is legitimated by her knowledge of the rules and regulations of behavior in public spaces, but also by her explanation of these rules. This sanctioning aspect of their daily work appeared regularly in reflections. It is part of the legitimacy to explain, and as a consequence, to sanction part of the daily interactions in the public sphere, on the streets, in the neighborhood center, and at the playgrounds. PAEs do this all the time, for instance, as they outline the procedures for how to apply for funding, get permits to organize a neighborhood activity or when they remind the NC-members of the formal rules of conduct of the NC. They also inform community members about legal procedures to issue complaints.

However, sometimes sanctioning is not part of a specific professional routine, but instead is more informal. For instance, P. recalls how he, as a guardian of one of the NCs, also tends to follow what happens after the meetings and outside the meetings. Despite the semi-formal status of the NC, their decisions sometimes are overruled at a local council meeting. An NC-member who is discontent about decisions made in the NC can use his contacts in the local council to oppose those decisions. A PAE has to be aware of such possible tactics. Being able to anticipate events like that in the community helps to increase the recognition of his professional expertise. He or she will be taken serious as a result. This recognition is not rooted in formal knowledge, but rather in informal street-level knowledge. Careful observation, anticipation, and the use of this local networks functions as sanctioning community governance.

In sum, the general feature of the strategy to develop, maintain, defend or restore a sense of expertise vis-à-vis the community can be labeled as “modeling.” This modeling strategy provides professional legitimacy on the basis of three legitimating resources: usefulness (pragmatic resources), justness (moral resources), and knowledgeability (cognitive resources). These resources function as conversion factors in the process of legitimation of their presence and actions in the community. One element of that modeling strategy is exemplifying, which entails the embodiment of an “ideal-type.” This refers to the ideal qualities of how neighborhood governance should work (procedural, moral and cognitive conversion factors). A second aspect of that modeling strategy is supportive diplomacy. This combines an invitational approach towards new community members, with de-escalation of conflicts in existing community relationships (moral, technical and cognitive conversion factors). A third element of the modeling strategy is sanctioning, and this provides the community members
with both knowledge, as well with modes of conduct in public spaces (moral consequences and cognitive conversion factors).

### 5.5.5. Summary of the legitimation strategies of the Bos en Lommer PAEs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituent of Professional Legitimacy</th>
<th>Legitimation Strategy Legitimating Resources</th>
<th>Variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Tapping in</td>
<td>Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing good</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing right</td>
<td>and moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-creation</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Installing</td>
<td>and cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fostering</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control and Stability</td>
<td>Regulating</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positioning</td>
<td>and moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Association</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leveling</td>
<td>and cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exemplifying</td>
<td>and cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive diplomacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sanctioning</td>
<td>Moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and cognitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. Overview of the legitimation strategies and their resources, linked to the respective constituents of legitimacy, reported by the Bos en Lommer PAEs.

### 5.6. General summary of the findings in this chapter

In this chapter, both the foundations of professional legitimacy, as well as the legitimation strategies of participation and activation employees (PAEs) in Bos en Lommer have been explored. Working in a social neighborhood team (SNT), their focus is on stimulation of potential voluntary participation in an ethnically diverse and economically challenged neighborhood, aside from coaching neighborhood committees. In daily practice, the PAEs faced resistance at street-level and by organized citizens, partly due to the severe cuts in public spending on community services that were implemented at the time of this study. In addition, the professional mandate of the PAEs suffers from another major change: the recent re-organization of low-threshold community organizations into one general welfare organization. At the same time, PAEs appear to face serious competition from a myriad of formal and semi-formal community initiatives that work alongside them.

Against the background of these challenges in practice, the following constituents of the PAEs’ professional mandate were distinguished:

The first constituent is recognition of PAEs’ professional capacity as a form of passive support. This refers to a capacity, first of all resting on transparency in the interactions between local people and community organizations. The experience of support from Combiwel’s management also is said
to contribute to their operational ability. A third association with recognition as a professional was found in their ability to create bonds with the local people.

The second constituent of their mandate is engagement of the local community members with each other and the rest of the community. This active form of support requires due procedures, and common interests. It also is essential for this engagement that the efforts of local people are aligned with and calibrate with the activities of other local actors and organizations.

The third constituent is control and stability. This expresses a concern for continuity over time of the PAEs’ involvement as community workers. Stability is expressed in their deliberative ability. This deliberation enables them to reflectively apply activation techniques, so that the continuous engagement of the community is not solely dependent on the presence of the PAE.

The fourth constituent of the PAEs’ professional mandate is recognized expertise. This expertise is an expression of their need to possess credibility in their involvement with local people. Credibility is rooted in discretionary space, and in the ability of PAEs to assume appropriate positions in the volatile Bos en Lommer neighborhood politics.

The operational dimension of professional legitimation by the Bos en Lommer PAEs has been examined and this yielded a number of legitimation strategies, connected to these building blocks of professional legitimacy used by PAEs.

The strategy linked to the recognition, is tapping-in. This includes the PAE addressing his professional actions as morally good (“doing good”), morally right (“doing right”), or rooted in mutual efforts (“co-creation’). Each of these forms of tapping-in refer to the transformation or conversion of the values and existing knowledge of the local residents. This could lead to a common frame of reference (“symbolic universe”) motivating the involvement of the PAE. Sometimes, these values have a moral dimension (just ways of doing things, just causes, just structures); sometimes there is a pragmatic base for that positive valuation: “PAEs are welcome because they act in our interest.”

The second legitimation strategy, accommodation, is linked to the stimulation of local community members’ engagement. Sometimes this engagement has to come from the active local people (NC-members, volunteers). However, in other cases, the not-yet active neighborhood people are targeted. Here, PAEs predominantly make appeals to mundane, pragmatic interests of local people. One of the variants of accommodation is “installing” which gives people influence, by inviting them to phrase their individual efforts in terms of a greater purpose: that of the development, or the benefit of the broader community. Sometimes PAEs use more tangible incentives. Rewarding, for instance, refers to granting the efforts of local residents, money, facilities, or just some personal attention (exchange). Somewhat similar is the “fostering” approach in which PAEs assume here a supporting, nurturing role to fuel local initiatives.

The third legitimation strategy is regulating, which is linked to the management of control and stability of PAEs’ relations with the community over time. Notably, PAEs see regulating as an active endeavor to professionally root them locally and to develop a stable mandate. This regulating strategy entails that PAEs strategically position themselves among other local actors, based on being conscious about their normative professional assignment as community-oriented professionals. Calibrating with the local mores is essential. Simultaneously, these community workers defend challenges to their mandate by convincing their environment about the added value of their professional presence.

The fourth legitimation strategy, this one linked to PAEs’ ability to manage challenges to their expertise, has been labeled as modeling, which refers to different approaches to evoke recognition for their expertise from the environment. The first approach, phrased as “exemplifying,” refers to
PAEs who are displaying an ideal form of community interaction, based on either morally accepted notions of governmentality (how the government should relate to local people), or mutual respect between community members (civility). A second form of modeling, “supportive diplomacy” is derived from PAEs’ reflections about their inclusive approach to community politics, especially in situations of conflicts. A third approach to modeling, is demonstrated when PAEs “sanction” favorable behavior in public spaces through formal and informal channels.

5.7. Statement of the findings of professional legitimation in Bos en Lommer as a CMO-configuration

CONTEXT: Legitimation management by the Participation and Activation Employees in Bos en Lommer has to account for, and consequently derive, its legitimating resources from the following contextual features: a relatively strong tradition of civil society and local governance, and from the strong constraints of social policy, characteristic for many social democracies. Furthermore, in processes of legitimation, the PAEs have to work predominantly with the social developmental needs identified by the local people. This work takes place in a setting characterized by the de-institutionalization of professional community development work.

MECHANISM: In order to secure experiences of professional legitimacy, the PAEs apply different legitimation strategies. These strategies can be summarized as either tapping in, accommodating, regulating or modeling. Each of these strategies is linked to specific constituents of legitimacy.

OUTCOME: The constituents of professional legitimacy in Bos en Lommer can be characterized either as recognition, engagement, control and stability, or expertise.
Chapter 6. The legitimacy of politicizing life world concerns: Community organizing in Chelsea, MA

Community development in Chelsea is about mobilization and education. Organizers in this vibrant immigrant city, with only a river separating it from affluent Harvard, go from door to door, looking for people who have fallen victim to predatory loans. They organize rallies to invite the passing, undocumented workers to a public meeting about racial profiling. In the shadow of their public appearances, they strategize with public officials, participate in equal rights coalitions, and work on environmental, political and economic literacy of their volunteers, whom they see as potential and able activists for a society that is based on justice.

6.1. Chelsea, a challenged but vibrant arrival city

Chelsea is an urban industrial city near Boston (Massachusetts, USA). Officially, Chelsea has a population of 35,1709. However, informal sources, such as police officials and local organizers, estimate the Chelsea population as up to 60,000 people. This gap is due to the many unofficial and unregistered immigrants, of which a large majority has a Latino background10. While being the smallest city of the State of Massachusetts (6.4 m2), it is also the second most densely populated area of the State. The city is surrounded by water, with the Mystic River on the southwest, the Chelsea Creek, the Mill Creek and the Island End River on the west. Founded by settlers in 1624, Chelsea is known for the “Battle of Chelsea Creek” in 1775, a famous battle of the American Revolution. Starting in the mid-1800’s, it developed into a wooden ship-manufacturing town; and when steam-powered boats took over shipping, Chelsea started to develop factories alongside the rivers that produced shoes, boots and elastic fabrics. Currently, it is one of the largest transit points for goods onto the mainland of Massachusetts. While the City of Chelsea is one of the major employers, the packing industry in the city and adjacent towns also provides a considerable number of jobs11.

In the 1970’s, Chelsea gradually developed from a town formerly known for its large population of Jewish people, into a center for Latino immigrants. With racial tensions arising as a consequence, two decades later the town also became one of the poorest and most dangerous areas of Massachusetts. Economic recession, but also political mismanagement, drove the city into bankruptcy in 1991. After years of “state receivership,” de facto handing over the town to State Legislators, in 1995, the city was returned into the hands of its population, who drafted a city charter that put a city manager – and not a mayor- under the control of the city council. This pushed local government into transparency with regard to public finances and policies12. In 1998, Chelsea was named as one of ten “All American Cities” in the US, due to its vibrant civic engagement, using grass-roots approaches to solve local problems.

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9 http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/25/2513205.html
10 Personal conversation with Rosie, Chairwoman of the Board of the Chelsea Collaborative and member of the Chelsea Police Department
11 http://www.ci.chelsea.ma.us/Public_Documents/ChelseaMA_WebDocs/about
12 http://www.ci.chelsea.ma.us/Public_Documents/ChelseaMA_WebDocs/about
Local developmental needs. Still, these days Chelsea is known for its striking social characteristics\(^\text{13}\). First, there is its predominant Latino population: 84% of current school enrollments are of Hispanic background, with non-English as first language\(^\text{14}\). In comparison with the State of Massachusetts as a whole, median age is relatively low (32.8 vs 38.2) 62.2 % of the families are considered as poor, and almost 30 % of the children live below the poverty line. The unemployment rates are high and distributed along ethnic lines (Latino population: 11 %, against 2.7 % of the white people unemployed).

During the last decade, Chelsea has been confronted with a number of serious challenges with regard to public health, the environment, public safety, and housing. Public health issues and environmental issues have been of great concern as the Chelsea area has a great number of people with heart conditions, asthma and COPD. The latter two diseases are assumed to be partly a result of the fuel emissions from the nearby Logan Airport \(^\text{15}\). A second source for the high prevalence of asthma and COPD has been found in the emissions from the large number of diesel trucks leaving the many distribution centers in Chelsea each day. In addition, there is the heavily polluted Chelsea Creek that bears many health hazards for people who tend to recreate there and also eat the fish swimming in the water. Chelsea’s city center is also a “food desert”, with only two major food markets at the borders of town and a great many fast food shops in the center. According to organizers, this has contributed to food-related disorders; a considerable proportion of the elderly and the youngsters in Chelsea are suffering from obesity and diabetes.

Chelsea also knows a number of public safety issues. With crime rates some years four and a half times as high as the state level \(^\text{16}\), the streets of some parts of town have turned into dangerous places to go. Also the public areas are especially full of risks for the many undocumented immigrants, according to the organizers of Chelsea Collaborative. Allegedly, the police engage in “racial profiling,” leading to arrests and imprisonment, purely on the basis of people’s ethnic features.

At the time of the field research, the aftermath of the global financial crisis was still tangible in the form of a great number of house evictions due to mortgage foreclosures. According to social activists working for the Chelsea Collaborative at that time, many residents of Chelsea had been buying houses with “predatory loans” provided by banks, which increased the interest rates dramatically over the years. This has left homeowners with unaffordable monthly payments. Unable to meet these growing financial demands, many homeowners were faced with foreclosure, forcing them to leave their houses. Organizers from the Chelsea Collaborative, the organization in which the field research took place, organized people who suffered from “predatory loans” into collective action, urging State legislators to intervene in the financial sectors with a law that forces banks to install mediation in case of foreclosure.

Traditions of local governance and civil society. The city of Chelsea has, like many cities in the US, a vibrant network of civil society organizations\(^\text{17}\). This network ranges from the local Boy Scouts, the Little League baseball team, and the Boys and Girls Club for the youth, to immigrant organizations such as Centro Latino. A great number of specific community organizations such as the Chelsea Historical Society and Chelsea Substance Abuse Centers also are active in town. At the level of gov-

\(^{13}\) http://www.city-data.com/city/Chelsea-Massachusetts.html retrieved April 7, 2015
\(^{14}\) Massachusetts School and District Profiles Shurtleff Early Childhood
\(^{15}\) 2013 Report Card - Shurtleff Early Childhood
\(^{16}\) http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ma/chelsea/, retrieved April 8 2015
\(^{17}\) http://www.ci.chelsea.ma.us/Public_Documents/ChelseaMA_bcomm/index
ernance, the city hosts a number of civic-driven boards, such as the Economic Development Board, the Youth Commission, the Human Rights Commission, and the Board of Health. Participation in these commissions is open to the general public, provided they are registered as an inhabitant of Chelsea. This excludes many undocumented Latino immigrants, due to their precarious formal position. As will be addressed in one of the following sections, the interests of the Latino population were not always adequately represented in city boards. Therefore, the Chelsea Collaborative as a community organization in some sense supplements these official boards by thematically organizing people that have no access to the formal channels. In fact, even though some of the organizers of the Collaborative have or used to have positions in City Council and formal boards, a certain “sense of opposition” was undeniably present in the Collaborative headquarters when local politics was discussed.

Social policy constraints. In the United States, social policy has a number of distinct features. What it firstly characterizes, is the political division of responsibilities between the Federal and State level of government with regard to funding and administration; secondly, it features a rather restrictive and punitive system of individual (income) support. A primary resource of social policy comes from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of Community Development Block Grants. As a city with – officially- under 50,000 inhabitants, Chelsea receives these federal funds, which are distributed by the State of Massachusetts. In 2013, this was a sum of $900,000 to invest in public housing, economic development, and public facilities\(^18\). This grant is linked to a long-term local development agenda in Chelsea\(^19\). According to De Graauw, Gleeson and Bloemraad (2012), CDBG’s have been known to strongly support the development of grass-roots initiatives in urban areas. Furthermore, since the 1960’s War on Poverty, a strong tradition of private-public partnerships has been built on the local level (de Graauw et al., 2012).

In addition to the collective CDBG, a number of individual forms of social and financial support systems are linked to social security\(^20\). These include the Federal Old-Age (Retirement), Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Health Insurance for Aged and Disabled (Medicare), Grants to States for Medical Assistance Programs for low income citizens (Medicaid), State Children’s Health Insurance Program for low income citizens (CHIP), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). It must be noted that at the time of the field research, due to their precarious legal position, a large part of the Latino immigrant community did not have access to many of these financial support resources. For many of them, the Chelsea Collaborative is perhaps the only local organization that is concerned with their vulnerable position.

6.2. The Chelsea Collaborative: politicizing grass-roots community organizing

The Chelsea Collaborative (also the Collaborative or CC from here), home base for this field research, is a community organization, founded in 1988 as the Chelsea Human Services Collaboration. It is now a non-governmental grass-roots organization, funded predominantly by a mix of private

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\(^20\) [https://www.ssa.gov/](https://www.ssa.gov/)
and charity grants. Its focus is on educational and organizing strategies around a number of locally relevant social, political, cultural, but also economic and human rights themes. In the early days, it was an organization “that tended to be dominated by white middle class professionals,” as one of my informants explained. Said to be unresponsive to the needs of non-white constituents, the organization was taken over after a culture clash by local leadership, predominantly with Hispanic background. Its headquarters moved in 2012 to 315 Broadway, on one of Chelsea’s vibrant main streets. Its offices are just across from Tito’s, a lunchroom, whose owner is a member of the Collaborative Board and sponsors meetings of the organization by providing free coffee and pastries.

The Chelsea Collaborative’s budget is approximately 1.5 million dollars. It is funded by a mixture of sources, including private charitable foundations, business organizations, religious foundations, individual donations, membership dues, and a variety of grass-roots fundraising projects (an annual dinner “gala”, raffles, auctions, and testimonial “advertisements” from supporters in publicity program books). The Collaborative does not seek nor receive any government funds for its community organizing activities, since the organization’s leadership (board and staff) believes that the receipt of such monies might compromise its independence. There is a concern that dependence on public funding might have a “chilling effect” on the organization’s willingness to engage and challenge governmental decision-makers who provide financial support. However, the Collaborative does receive public funding from both the State and the City of Chelsea in order to operate a summer youth employment program for low-income teenagers, since this activity does not entail any form of political confrontation.

Before going into more depth with regard to the tasks and activities of the local community organizers in the next paragraphs, a few rough sketches of the width and range of the Collaborative’s programs is presented. At the time of the field research, the organization hosted eight basic programs, either thematically ranging from housing, education, youth, labor to environmental issues, or on the basis of immigrant background such as the Latino and Somali Bantu organizations. Each of the programs is headed by a Program Director. In practice, many of the programs are functioning by active involvement of local volunteers.

**Professionalization practices.** As in most countries, working in community organizing or community development does not require a formal degree in the USA, such as Macro Social Work or Community Development. In fact, many of the local organizers of the Collaborative do not have an educational background in those fields. Some of them were able to develop themselves as local leaders and joined the Collaborative, or were recruited by the Collaborative. Claire, for instance, a life-long Chelsea citizen, and Program Director of Green Space, studied Public Health. A majority of the organizers coming from outside Chelsea did have a Bachelor or Master degree in associated fields, such as Environmental or Developmental Studies. One of them, Anica, also participated in a number of workshops on organizing techniques. Leo, one of the long time volunteers with a track record in local organizing, is a retired science teacher. One of the Board members and, in that capacity, one of the Collaborative’s principle advisors, was at the time of the field study Professor of Macro Social Work Practice at Boston University. In the presentation of the data from the field research, some of the professionalization issues related to the different educational and social backgrounds will be discussed in more detail.

Secondly, and in contrast to the Dutch practices (as described in Chapter 5), the Collaborative’s professionals have no specific job descriptions or clearly delineated tasks. Although being responsible for the managing of progress in specific field strategies or campaigns, for instance in organizing home owners around a new bill of legislation, at the operational level. Nevertheless, organizers of
the Collaborative are used to join each other whenever needed or possible to be present at public events. So, for instance, at the rally held on May 10th in Chelsea Square to inform Latino immigrants about the implementation of the Secure Communities Act, almost every organizer was present with flyers, megaphones and banners to attract attention on the street. A specific division of labor in participating in these public activities could not be discerned, except possibly on the basis of time and availability of the staff, as well as the possible public impact of the presence of specific colleagues. For instance, Angela, the director of the Collaborative, in general is considered to be one of the prominent figures of the Collaborative.

Furthermore, many staff held a responsible position within the Collaborative, with a large degree of professional duties. From time to time, there were general staff meetings being held during which organizers gave updates of running activities. But besides being social gatherings filled with local gossip and social bonding, these meetings were predominantly used to discuss how to combine resources such as professional networks, and to mobilize colleagues to participate in upcoming events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>AIM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA CITYWIDE TENANTS ASSOCIATION (CTA)</td>
<td>To improve leadership among tenants, promote better living conditions, as well as support home owners in defense against “predatory” loans and house evictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA COMMUNITY FUND (CCF)</td>
<td>A community &quot;matching fund&quot; to financially support citizens’ initiatives in Chelsea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA GREEN SPACE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE (GREEN SPACE)</td>
<td>Originally initiated as a grass-roots committee to promote &amp; develop green spaces and parks to replace open spaces, now also active in environmental justice issues and public health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA LATINO IMMIGRANT COMMITTEE (CLIC)</td>
<td>Supports the Latino community in advocating workers’ and immigrants’ rights, and leadership development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE (CSYEI)</td>
<td>Combines organizing paid summer job opportunities for the local Chelsea Youth, with mentoring and personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA UNITED IN DEFENSE OF EDUCATION (CUDE)</td>
<td>Supports parents and children to participate in the public education system to advocate for improvement of schools’ performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHELSEA VOTER INITIATIVE</td>
<td>Dedicated to promote political participation among Chelsea residents by stimulating registration as voters and participation in local elected boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHANBRO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION</td>
<td>Supports the immigrant Somali Bantu community in Chelsea with school, health care and other relevant public services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1. Overview of the Collaborative’s programs and their goals
6.3. Professional tasks of the Chelsea community organizers.21

In general, the practice of the Collaborative organizers can be described as “political community organizing” (Staples & Gradener, 2012). This form of community development mobilizes people around concrete issues in their daily lives and supports them to develop awareness of the structural causes of their problems. With its focus on knowledge and skills enlargement, community organizing also supports communities in the development of local leadership and power enhancement. This form of politicizing community organizing has its roots in the radical social work tradition (Reich & Andrews, 2001, p. 17). Community organizers function in different roles, ranging from “instructor, motivator, agitator, facilitator, educator, trainer, strategic expert, tactician and coach” (Staples & Gradener, 2012, p. 144). They feature a number of characteristic activities in these roles, central in community organizing.

**Expanding the constituency.** One of the prime concerns of the community organizers of the Collaborative is building and expanding constituencies around concrete issues at hand. The actions against the implementation of the Secure Communities Act (SCA or S-Comm) for instance, involved an elaborate mobilization of the many undocumented immigrants living in the Chelsea community.

The S-Comm enables a flow of information between local law-enforcement agencies and the Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE), aiming to gather intelligence with regard to illegal and possible terrorist activities. Fingerprints and other personal information could be exchanged with ICE even in case of a small misdemeanor, a wrongful arrest or just a call to the police for assistance in domestic violence – the latter not uncommon in Latino families. An arrest could, and indeed sometimes did, result in deportation to one of the many prison centers in the USA.

The staff of the Collaborative organized a rally on the day of the implementation of the S-Comm in front of Chelsea’s City Hall, by gathering people passing by, explaining the hazards of the S-Comm, and inviting them to a public hearing at Chelsea High School a few weeks later. The volunteers from the Chelsea Tenants Association, on the other hand, would go out door knocking in Chelsea’s neighborhoods, looking for tenants and homeowners, who were at risk to become victims of the “predatory loans” practices of the banks. If one enters the offices of the Collaborative during the day, one might find the organizers on the phone or behind the computer screen, following up on leads and possible contacts. Organizers gather and exchange stories from people and transform them into appealing “narratives,” so that they can function as touting examples to fuel mobilization.

**Creating momentum.** A second challenge in practice for community organizers is to look for opportunities for further action. Experiences of success are paramount here, and organizers will put effort into creating small successes by dividing their campaigns into smaller parts with specific incremental goals. For instance, Chelsea Green Space programmed a number of specific activities as part of a strategy opposing a proposed power plant in Chelsea by organizing sit-ins, rallies and a public hearing just before the Gubernatorial Elections. As a follow-up for the public hearing where 400 citizens voiced their concerns, Green Space organized a writing session that lead to 127 comments from residents on the plans for the Power Plant.

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21 This section is a strongly revised adaptation of a previously published chapter on political community organizing by Staples & Gradener (2012)
**Politicking problems.** In addition to organizing campaigns in the form of smaller sub-steps enabling successful experiences, the community organizers will also connect their direct concerns with the broader social and political circumstances. This “politicking” strategy entails a learning process, enabling people to question power disparities, repression, and social and economic rights. Within the Collaborative, different, but also overlapping, motives and strategies exist for politicking problems. CTA organizer Annica sees politicking as the creation of a unified “narrative.” This narrative, based on dialogue to collectively create goals for change, is combined with deliberation on planning and implementation of future actions. For Claire, Program Director of the Green Space Coalition, politicking means tactically and strategically organizing local people to make their concerns for environmental-friendly living conditions heard. Other local organizers, such as the Collaborative’s Director, Angela, but also Leo, an experienced community leader connected with Chelsea Green Space, embodied a more direct style of politicking local issues. They formulate profound social critique with regard to the social exclusion mechanisms in public institutions, locally, but also nationwide.

**Creating a powerbase and investing in leadership development.** A fourth task of the Collaborative’s organizers is the establishment of a stable powerbase upon which future collective actions could be built. Although many of the staff, during rallies and public meetings, tended to take a prominent role as spokespersons, constituencies were being built out of direct stakeholders in the background. In the case of the CTA, Annica invested in the creation and maintenance of a strong circle of people who were willing to participate in collective actions.

Besides the development of political consciousness about systemic injustices, organizers also tend to stress the importance and effectiveness of political involvement. This is seen as a way to build ongoing political power. For instance, The Green Space Coalition, led by Claire, enlarged its local power base by recruiting Chelsea residents and enabling them to become involved in the political process preceding a political decision by the State of Massachusetts to build or not to build a power plant near the Chelsea Schools. Claire later recaptured the process of leadership development in a case study she wrote for her master’s degree in Public Health. In the stage, residents and possible victims were able to voice their concerns through the supra local Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB), Green Space, and other bodies.

**Finding allies and working with the media.** Finally, a fifth concern in community organizing in Chelsea, is to work towards the enlistment of individual allies, and to enter into formal coalitions. For the CTA, for instance, alliances between tenants and homeowners turned out to be a fundamental component of their campaign. They also worked with pro bono lawyers, while other community groups, such as City Life/Vida Urbana, trained the local activists. Ultimately, the CTA became part of a regional coalition. Together with over sixty other groups, they drafted and successfully lobbied for the passage of the Bill of Tenants in the State House of Massachusetts.

Also, Chelsea Green Space acquired support from elected officials and pro bono lawyers. In the campaign against the building of a power plant, while support was gained from individual faculty members at the Boston University and Harvard Schools of Public Health, environmental organizations such as the Conservation Law Foundation, HealthLink, Urban Ecology Institute, and Clean Water Action also gave their actions leverage. They found additional allies within the state’s environmental agencies.

Besides alliances with local people, non-governmental actors, civil organizations, and experts from universities members of the media also are regularly approached as possible allies in campaigns. Two days before the Bill of Tenants was discussed in the State House, Annica organized a
press conference on the steps of the Massachusetts State House, giving the message on Public Radio, Channel 5 and Channel 7, regional TN networks. “Angry home owners are afraid that the foreclosure bill will not be strong enough.”

**Some urgent matters.** Within the time frame of the field study, the Collaborative was involved in a number of campaigns. One of the most prominent ones at that time was the campaign against the implementation of the Secure Communities Act (SCA, or S-Comm) on May 15, 2012. At the time of the field study, the Collaborative participated in rallies in Boston and Chelsea, organized meetings with statewide coalitions, and also met with the local law enforcement officials. During public information sessions, they kept the Latino immigrants updated.

Just as urgent, was the campaign of the Chelsea Tenants Association (CTA). At the time of the study, the CTA was supporting a growing number of local people who had been enticed and deceived by banks to buy homes with loans that - at first sight- offered affordable interest rates. These loans were, as it turned out later, part of "sub-prime" mortgages, speculated upon by banks with the expectation that people would eventually not be able to fulfill their monthly mortgage payments. When the interest rates increased, and the economic crisis made many homeowners unemployed, not surprisingly people were not able to pay back the banks. By engaging with local tenants and homeowners, as well as with a number of supra-local tenants’ coalitions and civil rights advocates, the CTA developed a successful media campaign. Massachusetts’ State Legislators were pushed to pass a law that would prohibit illegal and unnecessary foreclosures and mandate a process of mediation between the banks and the homeowners.

Alongside their engagement with these above sketched urgent issues, the Collaborative was also involved in a number of other more long-term campaigns. One of them was the protest against the transport of Ethanol by rail through many communities in New England. Also, frequently, organizers were present during protests of immigrant laborers at the entrance gates of the local packing industry, advocating for better working conditions and claiming payment of overdue salaries.

At the time of the study, another major concern was how to handle the threat of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) to withdraw their financial support. This Caritas organization of the American Catholic Church discovered accidentally that the Chelsea Collaborative was openly supporting equal rights for LGBT individuals, which does not match well with the Catholic doctrine of heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of relationship. The Collaborative engaged in a public campaign, announcing that it was returning the funding, and challenged the Catholic Church’s position on sexual diversity. In the end, other funders, supportive to the Collaborative’s position, offered to replace the returned funds.

In the midst of these urgencies, the field study focused on how the local organizers of the Collaborative dealt with challenges to their professional legitimacy. For instance, more specifically, the inquiries zoomed in on the reflections of the organizers about what they considered as support for their actions, as well as the underpinnings for their credibility and persistence as local agents. In the following section, the constituents, or the building blocks, of that professional legitimacy will be explored in more detail.

**6.4. The contextual constituents of the Chelsea organizers’ professional mandate**
This study assumes that, in order to be able to function as a professional, community workers have to negotiate their mandate in daily interactions with stakeholders. As previously outlined, this implies corresponding interests in performing professional tasks, as well as a practitioner’s strategic awareness about the boundaries of one’s professional mandate. Aspects of this strategic awareness become explicit in reflections, when the professional is challenged to consider his position in relation to the situation in which he or she is working. This is what this study considers as the contextual dimension of professional legitimation. In these reflections, situational judgments become visible. For instance, when organizers reflect on their door knocking activities, they will admit that in many unsafe Chelsea neighborhoods, at first, people will be wary of opening their doors to strangers. At the same time, but in the background, they will be aware that this wariness challenges their ability to engage in a professional manner with the local people. In a similar vein, the activists of Chelsea Green Space will have to put effort into convincing Chelsea residents to consider the fact that protesting against governmental decisions about environmental issues is worthwhile, since it can possibly improve their quality of living.

In order to distill the constituents of professional mandate from the reflections of the Chelsea organizers, plus other material, such as specific cases and observations, four sensitizing concepts are used: (1) the experience of passive support, an initial, yet unarticulated form of support; (2) the experience of active support, a more explicit or stronger form of support; (3) the experience of continuity, holding a promise of, or an actual situation of sustained engagement of community members and other allies; and (4) the experience of credibility, becoming tangible in signs of being trusted by the community.

6.4.1. Audiences as an expression of passive support

Just as is the case in Bos en Lommer (see Chapter 5), also in Chelsea, professionals are looking for a preliminary mandate to position and to present themselves as professional. In Bos en Lommer, Participation and Activation Employees searched for a possibility to connect with specific categories of community people. These are target groups which were defined by local social policy. In Chelsea, organizers develop their professional legitimacy by a creation of audiences.

For organizers, passive support seems to be associated with the preliminary moments of contact with the local residents, when looking for ways to address their concerns. For instance, preliminary moments are recruitment efforts, such as the door knocking activities of the CTA in target neighborhoods, or by organizing a rally in front of City Hall on the day the S-Comm was effectuated. Not only in these early stages of their engagement efforts with local people, but also in the follow-up stages of campaigns and programs, organizers expressed concerns about keeping people’s attention. For instance, when Annica recruited a volunteer for her CTA, she would consequently try to engage him or her into other activities, such as participation in educational meetings. She tried to stimulate her volunteers to develop a common political narrative about the systemic causes of house evictions. Not every volunteer was by nature or upbringing inclined to tell stories, so Annica needed to trust her ability to successfully address the necessity of such analyses. Therefore, she had to regularly assess whether she still had an initial mandate with the CTA-volunteers. She gave an example of refreshing her mandate by checking it with one of these volunteers:

“He hasn’t really said anything to me about what this means to him but the fact that he keeps coming, I want to sit down with him and say ‘How is it going, how are you feeling, what are you learning, what are you getting out of this and how can I support you more?’ And have that conversation.”
Organizers sought to create a foundation where mutual interests (of the organizer and the participants) could be matched 22. Finding an audience is making an effort to match interests, and to start a dialogue – between the one who begins to express a concern and the one who is willing to listen. In that matching, an audience can be developed. The question is, “What do organizers need in order to constitute that audience?” When reflecting on the requirements for finding and maintaining an audience, organizers brought forward a number of associations.

A first association with finding and bolstering audiences that emerged from the interviews, was access. Access refers to the opportunity to reach audiences. For organizers, this is connected to place, time and other facilities. One example of access in terms of place is the location of the Collaborative. “Everybody knows where the Collaborative is,” says Rosie M. a Chelsea police officer and Chair of the Collaborative’s Board in an interview. She emphasized the importance of the organization’s recent move to this more visible site. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of how the Collaborative creates access to possible constituents is through its headquarters, situated on Broadway, one of Chelsea’s most central streets. It lies adjacent to a Post Office and a Day Care Center, and is surrounded by shops with affordable clothing and home supplies. It is also close to one of the most frequented bus stops in the city. As a result, the Collaborative has admission to the dynamics of Chelsea city life. And vice versa, the offices are an entry point for the many immigrants who come seeking advice, for instance, with regard to their rights as a day laborer, or as they visit the Collaborative to seek support for legal problems with immigration authorities. However, many youth also visit the offices if they want to apply for the Summer Youth Jobs Program, advertised in the office’s front window. Also, the banners for voters’ registration and other Collaborative low-threshold services for the Chelsea community - albeit indirectly - turn passing people into an audience for their other campaigns.

Besides its office, other forms of access are also mentioned, such as the time, the location and the facilities of their activities. For instance, Carla, the CUDE director (Chelsea United in Defense of Education), explained that many meetings with Chelsea residents usually are scheduled around lunchtime or dinnertime. Before activities, visitors often are welcomed at tables filled with tasty food and beverages.

Providing food and drinks is a deliberate action, according to Carla, who regularly invests in finding local businesses as sponsors for the meals on the table before the meetings start. Many of the potential constituents are struggling financially to make ends meet and consequently, a free meal is a strong incentive to visit the meetings. Also, eating adds a touch of “Latino culture” to the meetings, with families gathering around food, talking informally and exchanging stories.

Carefully considering locality, time and facilities is not the only effort of organizers with regard to finding audiences. Safety is also an issue associated with audiences. A minor, but not insignificant, detail that exemplifies their concerns for safety is the absence of cameras at the entrance of the Collaborative’s headquarters. For undocumented immigrants visiting the Collaborative, it might be comforting, knowing they are not being recorded if they enter to ask for help.

Safety is also an issue for youth organizer, Jimmy. One afternoon, he explained that he stayed in close contact with the parents of the youth who worked as volunteers for the organization in order to give them a sense of safeness. Sometimes, parents wanted to know where their kids would hang out, and Jimmy – but also other staff – would pay attention to assure the parents that their youngsters were safe.

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22 In Section 6.5, this element of legitimacy management by the Chelsea’s organizers is being described in more depth
Also, anticipation is an important aspect of the development of audiences. Anticipation refers to the response of organizers to concrete issues in the community, even before these issues are recognized by the people being affected by those issues as urgent. Claire, Program Director of the Green Space Coalition, recalls how she responded, when the city manager announced to her that a power plant would be built just across from a school. Anticipation here is exemplified by the way she connected this news with awareness about the consequences for mobilizing possible constituencies. So, she replied to Jay Ash, the City Manager, “Over my dead body!” She

“... immediately retreated to my office, informing my colleagues as well as the Leadership Team of Green Space. Everyone was quick to make decisions and quick to organize. However, the Director asked the staff and the members to hold off until she had the opportunity to ask questions of the proponents.”

Also, in the case of S-Comm, anticipation of the possible consequences for the Chelsea people, became evident. What the implementation of the Secure Communities Act would be for the many undocumented immigrants in Chelsea was initially not widely known amongst the Chelsea population. Nevertheless, the organizers responded to what might happen to the many undocumented immigrants by organizing a rally in front of City Hall in Chelsea. Equipped with megaphones, Olivia and Angela addressed a gathered crowd about the implementation of this policy, and assured that the Chelsea police would not cooperate with S-Comm.

This anticipatory strategy to create an initial audience, can also be found in the active way visitors of the Chelsea Collaborative’s offices are being treated. One of the recurring observations made was that weekly staff meetings, but also even Board Meetings, could be rescheduled or cancelled when urgencies came up. Usually, these urgencies involved instances of people in distress because of ill treatment by the police or because of possible house evictions. Even when meetings did take place, not unusually organizers also tended to be pulled out of meetings. The reasons for these interruptions were not always clear, and when asked for the reasons for the regular rescheduling or cancellation of the staff meetings, the organizers used to reply, “Hey, being here for the people of Chelsea is more important!”

Anticipation of the needs of the Chelsea people appeared not only to be essential for the initial “seizing” of the moment to create an audience, but also in further stages of organizing. For instance, Annica recalled how she tried to be responsive, as she reflected on her relation with active members of the CTA

“Well, I think that regardless of the kind of organizing, that relational organizing, that organizing based on people’s experience or stories, still the focus is not to bring in my analysis immediately, but to spend a lot of time listening.”

Besides access, safety and anticipation, as associated with passive support in the form of an initial audience, a fourth theme also emerges from the data: that of closeness. What could happen if the organizer’s concern lacked closeness, can be seen in an experience of Claire, when she started a campaign against the salt pile that was illegally developed at the Chelsea waterfront. This pile would provide the city and 361 other municipalities across the state of Massachusetts with salt to be spread on the icy roads in the winter season. Claire explains the dilemma:
“There were people that said, ‘I understand that they are violating the law, but in the summertime when the salt pile isn’t that tall, I can see the eastern or western waterfront of the Chelsea Creek. When you put a building up there, then I lose my view completely, and I won’t be able to see the water.’ A lot of people said, ‘We don’t want this law enforced.’ There wasn’t one clear feeling in the community.”

On the other hand, if there is a sense of closeness, constituents can grow. This is not only the case in the earlier stages of campaigns where organizers seek to establish constituencies around a specific theme, but also when they are broadening their audiences. Illustrative is Green Space’s campaign against the transport by trains carrying ethanol, a dangerous substance; it developed into a New England-wide coalition of towns where the Ethanol trains would be passing through.

Also, Annica is aware of the importance of keeping issues as close as possible during educational activities:

“I just ask people questions about their lives and listening to their story and trying to hear what they’re saying about what they see about the world and the government and their lives. So, yes, I am... It’s always a really hard balance to try to figure out how much of our own personal politics do we put into the work and also really leaving space to make sure we’re not pushing people to a space that isn’t comfortable for them or isn’t really accurate.”

What we have seen so far, is how organizers of the Collaborative seem to associate the preliminary stages of their professional mandate with the development of audiences. Audiences are in essence constituencies, conditional for a professional mandate. In the first place, they are recipients of messages about potential collective action to address their concerns. The development of audiences has been linked to four themes: access, safety, anticipation of local needs, and closeness. These challenges are not limited to the initial phases of the engagement between the organizer and participants. Also, in later stages, when campaigns require new roles of the participants, Chelsea organizers have to renew that sense of having an audience. In the following section, we will look more closely, at the strategic challenges of organizers, once their constituency has been established. What issues are linked to their efforts to establish a more stable, deeper commitment from the community members?

6.4.2. Transition of control as an expression of active support

Organizers in Chelsea consider the possession of an audience for their community concerns as one of the building blocks of their professional mandate. It enables them to function as a professional. Some of them are personal, and also some are organizational; but both sometimes play a prominent role in stepping forward to look for and to find the public eye. Nevertheless, in the end, they tend to also associate their legitimacy in terms of active support; that is, in a transformation of their constituents from recipients to active agents. At this point, there are the audiences they manage to gather in front of city hall, as well as their visitors during the yearly River Revel, during an educational talk on the health hazards of eating fish caught in the Chelsea Creek. Where are the signs that people are willing to take control, as it does ultimately signify active support for the original community organizers’ intentions?

For Leo, the shift in control is what legitimizes the work of the Collaborative: to transform “victims” into agents. He gives two examples of how the Collaborative aims to establish transformation:
one an example of an undocumented immigrant worker, and the other an example on how the Collaborative dealt with local dissent about educational policy:

“He was supposed to get eight dollars an hour; did he get eight dollars an hour? If he didn’t, then he was shafted, in respect of anything else. Well, illegals get a job, it’s illegal for them to do this. But employers like this because they don’t want to pay as much money as they would normally have to. They figure, ‘This guy doesn’t want to be deported, so he’ll keep his mouth shut.’ Well, after a while they get tired of keeping their mouth shut and this is one of the places they come.”

How to create “transitional spaces,” where organizers and participants face uncertainties that come with changing roles, is one of the themes that emerge in the reflections of the organizers. Annica, for instance, describes the creation of this space where uncertainty arises, as challenging:

“Well, there will be lots of people, there are people who I have invited to workshops and who come once and never come back again. And so I think that partially it was - it’s a good example, because I was able to really identify the need, that craving for community that he had and the loneliness that I saw in his struggle. But also there’s a certain amount of uncertainty and a lot of people don’t come back, so this was one, and a lot of people don’t get moved to that point.”

With “that point,” she refers to a moment of transition, of role changing, from a passive recipient of messages to an active agent in campaigns. During interviews, this form of legitimacy as an organizer has been associated with the ability to look ahead. Annica recalls:

“Because I’m up here and there is all these little people that have strings to me all around, and then I come out of the middle and everything falls. They’re all just then individuals with strings only connected to only one person and they fall apart and they have no connections to each other. I think that now there’s starting to be some strings, some connectors between other people but still if… People will say things [Spanish], ‘Together, we’re strong’ or ‘Only united can we win.’ But those become like phrases that people say and not actually, I don’t know if they actually feel that. What I try to do is find any occasion I can to connect people, if someone new calls up and I say, ‘Oh, you know, I’ve heard your story’s so similar to Maida’s’ or something, I’ll call Maida who’s been involved longer and I’ll say, ‘Maida, give this person a call and just ask them how they’re doing, what are you feeling, what’s going on?’ so that there’s connectors between people.”

According to Olivia, the ability to connect is of great importance:

“You’ve got to learn start thinking as an organizer. What are the campaigns that I can connect with people in? If this is what raised them... and what about those who just came because they felt something in there for them, but it isn’t really what they came for. It’s just for support. What is it in the organization that we can get them, hook them?”

Expansion and cohesion. Apparently, being able to expand the number of community members participating in campaigns adds to the legitimacy of the community organizing process. According to Leo, involved in organizing tenants, a campaign draws its legitimacy from “how many people we can get to complain.”

Xavier, working for Chelsea Green Space, sees expanding the scale of activities as a proxy for increasing participation as a major contributor to the legitimacy of the Collaborative’s campaigns.

Also Claire recognizes the importance of expanding the constituency in order to create a sense of ownership by the people affected. Besides failing to activate any snoozing dissent around the salt pile, her inability to increase the level of support also could account for the lack of legitimacy of her campaign against the salt pile.
Not only the expansion of the audience, but also the connection between participants, increases the legitimacy of her activities as a community organizer. Annica remembers how one of her CTA-members became an active member as a result of her endeavors to expand the number of participants. The following long quotation highlights how for organizers, besides expansion, the connection also can contribute to the legitimacy of the organizing process, since it can transform once vulnerable, isolated people into engaged community members:

“One day when I showed up at her house about something else, he was sitting there at her kitchen table and they were talking about what happened and what they had learned and trying to work on their presentation. And they had met a week before; they didn’t really know each other, but they got together. What he presented was [*laughs*], it was really hard to figure out how to present it, and it wasn’t really clear to me what he was saying when they did. But, from then on, he now has a lot of really close relationships with other people in the group and they do get together outside, and he also has just, he’s completely political now. He’s gone from being an individual to now.”

In this reflection, Annica accounts for the mix she created between expansion and internal cohesion and how this affected one of the volunteers. She expanded the world of the volunteer through education (“You are not alone”), connected him socially by introducing him to a fellow member and then, by inviting him to give a presentation.

Stakeholdership and ownership. Until now, strategic concerns were highlighted, based on the organizers’ situational assessments with regard to scale and scope of the campaign, and with consideration for the internal cohesion of the constituencies. By raising these strategic interests, organizers acknowledge their professional stakeholdership. Their actions did impact the role of participants in the campaigns they staff. Secondly, such strategic concerns also reflect the hope of, or expectancy for, an impetus. For instance, see what Annica asserts in an excerpt from the previous quote:

“And so, as much as I can say to one person ‘You are not alone, there’s lots of people out there!’ - this was a way that I thought that he could actually connect to other people through this workshop.”

In the last three words of this sentence (“through this workshop”) the strategic and the operational emerge simultaneously. The workshop on homeowners’ rights is a strategic tool, as it affirms Annica’s role as an organizer, and it is an operational tool as it is meant to create an impulse for the CTA’s campaign: The participants find each other as supporters in their fight against predatory lending practices.

Put differently, Annica associates active support (a form of strategic professional legitimacy) with the establishment of “ownership.”. Lay people who take over control of the organizing process might well be the pearl in the crown of organizing. So when a sense of ownership emerges, the organizer feels accomplishment and this legitimizes his actions. By contrast, the failure to establish this sense of ownership, is illustrated by a reflection on the anti-salt pile campaign. Claire:

“The community should make a decision and the organizer should listen to the community. The organizer should act on behalf of the community. I didn’t do that.”

Her confession to have failed in the transition of control by not having listened enough to her constituency is a negation of what transformation in the organizing process entails. Transformation refers to a process in campaigns when members start to think and act more like activists, but it also refers to moments when campaigns as a whole, develop impetus. Transformations of the former kind occur regularly, and according to organizers’ reflections, changes in behavior and ideas seem closely connected with the adaptation of a critical, adversarial attitude. The Collaborative is seen here as the nourishing, organizational “shell”, and the adoption
of a political narrative as the mediating mechanism. Leo, for instance, notices how undocumented workers find their way to the Collaborative and become active agents:

“Well, after a while they get tired of keeping their mouth shut and this is one of the places they come.”

Olivia asserts the importance of the Collaborative as a site that enables the people to transform from victims to active pursuers of justice:

“It’s not the organizer, it’s the group. I think that’s what they saw in these groups - that they see the Collaborative, not as the group I represent, [but] they see the Collaborative as the whole group. [...] That’s what [...] gets mobilized. When we say we do something, we do something, winning. Something we believe in, something we fight for.”

Annica accounts for the transformational processes not only by pointing to the Collaborative as a context where people meet and bond and develop a shared belief, but also to the bonding qualities of a shared political analysis:

“If we have an event in another part of Boston, I won’t come, so that people are forced to drive in the car with each other, and not have me there and not talk to me. I try to put myself out as much as I can, but I think there has to not only be relationships between people, like you know there are children, you know where they live, they are members of CTA, really basic things, but a shared political analysis, because, if not, then this work is not going to last. We can have a win together; we can win someone’s house back because we all supported them but we can’t change the system that has oppressed people unless we have a shared analysis. So that’s why I do bring in my own politics into the work and the people who are very involved share those politics. And that’s why they come for years after they’ve won their house back.”

In other words, leaders such as Leo and organizers like Olivia attribute the transformation of their constituencies to the bonding qualities of the Collaborative as a collective. Annica, on the other hand, tries to “loosen” her professional ties: she supports the development of political narratives as a mediating mechanism. For instance, an example is the role of globalization and economization in the development of subprime mortgages and how that in the end has especially affected people with a precarious economic background. It seems to matter where the organizers came from or live; organizers with local ties tend to emphasize the transformational role of the Collaborative as a local organization, while Annica and Marina, as outsiders, both emphasize the political narrative as a transformational vehicle.

6.4.3. Embedding as an expression of continuity

So far, two building blocks of the Chelsea organizers’ mandate have been identified: first of all, the audience is made up of local people, and secondly there is a process of transformation that turns the local audience into local change agents. These two constituents together reflect a sort of relational dimension of professional legitimacy in community organizing. In addition to this relational dimension, there also is a temporal dimension in the building of professional ties between organizers and the community; this refers to the continuity of that engagement. During events or rallies, organizers develop a short-term relationship, such as during the River Revel, Voters registration, and the talent scouting for the Chelsea Youth Summer Jobs Programs. Mid-term relationships come with spe-
cific target campaigns, such as the mobilization efforts to campaign against the Ethanol-transport through New England. How does “time” contribute to the legitimacy of the organizers?

**Bonding and co-ownership.** A first association with continuity, which emerges in the reflections of organizers, is bonding. Annica realizes that the degree of connection among volunteers determines the durability of an initiative. The sustainability of the CTA rests to a large degree on her being present and developing bonds between people, because:

“... it seems really hard for people to share with each other sometimes, which is kind of confusing for me and worrisome for me. Because if I have a lot of relationships with people but they don’t have relationships with each other, and then if I get taken out of the picture, it just falls apart.”

Even though she puts great effort into the creation of mutual bonds amongst the members of the CTA, she admits her enduring presence over time is crucial.

**Appropriation of control.** Not completely unrelated is another aspect of continuity emerging from the reflections of the Chelsea organizers. This concerns a form of appropriation by the community. It is an internalization of the initiative, leading to a form of co-ownership. This is a process whereby initiatives become structurally embedded in, or become a significant part of, the lives of people. Claire, reflecting on how the campaign against the local government’s plan to build a power plant evolved over time, acknowledges this form of internalization of long-term mutual involvement in community affairs. Reflecting on how the campaign against the building of a power plant gained continuity over time, she remarks:

“It was information that was provided to the community, but I didn’t do it by myself. That was the important thing. We had a whole team of organizers who were working on this campaign. So, it wasn’t just me being up there, knocking on doors. We had a lot of folks who were doing a lot of work. I might have been at the City Council, but we were a team of folks that could bring our vision to City Hall.”

Also in Leo’s reflection on how Green Space developed a community park over time, co-ownership comes forward as a temporal aspect:

“Well, we went to a private company and got them to make some pro bono: a plan for the whole creek. What it would look like if things were really good. And then piece-by-piece-by-piece, we’re looking to do those things. Did a lot of these in Boston High, had about a hundred or two hundred people doing that. Maybe ten people from the Collaborative would go in there and you know, ‘What would you like to see?’ So it’s a community effort and it becomes a community effort and people feel a sense of accomplishment, ‘Hey, I helped make this!’

**Experience of success and focus.** Leo’s reflection not only marks the community efforts as a form of co-ownership. Whether or not community engagement sustains in the long-term also seems to be associated with experiences of success - in Leo’s words in “a sense of accomplishment.” This is in line with Annica’s evaluation; she sees long term engagement of the organization’s members with the local campaigns thriving on a combination of co-ownership and experiences of success. She recalls a man who has:

“[..] gone from being an individual to now, going from freaking out at every notice he got and needed to come here and be walked through and called later, to now feeling really prepared and he’s going to fight, he doesn’t have a real way to win his house back; he doesn’t. So, he’s just going to fight politically.”
Annica gives this example of a man who develops a fighting spirit, showing that experiences of success are not necessarily connected to a short-term gain, no matter how important winning back a house from a bank can be. This fighting spirit is, in the eyes of the organizer, a sign of her ability to transform a successful experience (“I can do something about my situation, but now in a political way”) into a long-term engagement. The volunteer has changed his perspective from a lone victim into a member of a community of able and active people. Christina, an organizer assigned to support immigrant workers in Chelsea, also regularly observes this shift in perspective when a sense of co-ownership develops. In order to receive practical and legal support with urgent, tangible work-related problems, Christina invites them first to an educational workshop:

“So, we have a workshop every Tuesday. If anyone comes with a problem, they first need to go to a workshop on Tuesdays. So, then after the workshop, we give them an intake, a date. ‘So, you come to meet with me on Tuesdays.’ […] So, we do a little game of, I say some statements and they say whether they think it’s true or false. So for example, ‘Is it true that an employer can fire you without any good reason?’ And so people say, ‘No! That’s not true! That’s illegal!’ and so we tell them ‘No, it’s true.’”

Reality checks generate knowledge amongst the workers, a step in a process of awareness development about the legal strategies needed to get their rights endorsed. This process of developing awareness takes time, and consequently, it secures the continuity of the organizing strategies. Christina gives another example of awareness development that gives continuity to the organizing process:

“…that’s another thing that we train them to keep a log of: ‘Every day you should write down how many hours you’ve worked. Because maybe five years from now, you will have a case against them and you will have to prove. So that’s valid in court, if you have your own paper.’ So we help them, trying to guard themselves from any problems.”

Claire adds another perspective to how organizers can secure the endurance of campaigns. She mentions how the right focus can keep people engaged over a longer period of time. As she looks back to how her campaign against the salt pile near the waterfront has stalled, she connects her inability to the lack of continuity in the campaign and a lack of focus. A lesson she learned is that targeting the right parties is essential:

“We focused on the company, brought a lot of bad publicity to the company. We started to direct our attention to the department of environmental protection. We directed a lot of attention to that agency. May be we should have directed more attention to the state officials, like the elected leaders.”

In hindsight, she admits her inability to focus on the right targets did stand in the way of developing a more long-term commitment from volunteers. Besides giving the campaign a more political touch, also giving focus to the personal, might have contributed to the necessary momentum:

“See, that’s one of the things we should have done. We should have gone up to their house; we should have embarrassed the family in their community. We should have done that stuff. We didn’t do that. We didn’t bring it to them. We brought it to their business in Chelsea. We didn’t bring it to them.”
A surprisingly antithetical analysis to Claire’s comes from Xavier, researcher for the Green Space coalition. He describes himself as a “critical friend” of the Collaborative. He notices still unutilized opportunities for long-term engagement between the organizers and the Chelsea community in expansion:

“I think the Collaborative as an institution; it doesn’t follow. I don’t think it’s following the pace of the social changes that Chelsea is going through. I think that the Collaborative is very good when it comes to listening to people’s concerns to offer them guidance. I think it’s great because it doesn’t judge by immigration status, by any social aspect which I think that [that’s sic.] it’s very proactive in that way, progressive. [...] And I think that’s one of the Collaborative’s strengths. However, when it comes down to managing and trying to move fast, trying to address specific problems that could probably trigger change in the city or promote change in the city. I think it is a little bit conservative; I don’t think the tools are there.”

Xavier’s point is here that the Collaborative is strong in anticipating to immediate crises in the community. But it might develop a more proactive strategy in developing and executing plans for deeper, long-range community development.

A crucial element of continuity is the organizer’s ability to structure the engagement of participants, but also, more abstractly, to also do this with the general public and other stakeholders. Without their efforts to create structure in the community’s engagement, in the form of mutual bonding, campaigns would eventually be extinguished. Without co-ownership of the issues at hand by the participants, nobody could claim the successes of the campaigns for social change. Experiences of success also fuel the durability in another way. As new insights and new skills enable participants in campaigns to address their problems more effectively, they also develop increased consciousness about the root causes, whether on a political, economic or judicial playing field. In that way, the structure of community actions changes from local mobilization and awareness-raising activities to the level of the playing field of the courthouses, the Massachusetts State Senate, and the media.

Before starting the exploration of the fourth building block of the Chelsea organizers’ professional mandate, a small, but not insignificant, remark of Leo needs to be pointed out here, since it aligns with the quality of the Collaborative as an organizational entity. For him, the staff of the Collaborative creates sustainable engagement between the organizer and community members:

“And then each of the parts of that big picture is a different group of people, and somebody is in charge of that; they’ve got an office and a telephone and they do the scat work. Figure out when the meetings should be, what the best places are we can go collecting information, all that.”

So, besides bonding and co-ownership, experiences of success, and focus, organizational alignment also might be important. After all, an organizational backbone for running future campaigns appears to be a contribution to the continuity of organizers’ work. It emphasizes the importance of the staff members, who take care of the basic work being done. But we have seen that organizers do more than just the basics; they take positions on local social issues.

### 6.4.4. Commonality as an expression of credibility

Without any doubt, working as an organizer in Chelsea carries the danger that one’s credibility will be challenged. While they openly engage with public issues, whether it is about parks, ethanol trains, crime, workers’ rights, or migration, organizers unavoidably rub against the local political, economic and cultural powers. They scrutinize the people who are part of the system that is respon-
sible for many of the social injustices that the constituencies of the Collaborative are suffering from. Hence, it would be no surprise if the targeted groups of many of the Collaborative’s campaigns would react negatively and strike back with strategies undermining the credibility of the organizers. However, to my surprise, there are hardly any indications for such a threat from outside. Of course, sometimes staff joked about the lack of support by The Chelsea Record, the local newspaper. But neither overtly nor covertly had I noticed that their authority, knowledge, morals or intentions were being questioned. On the contrary, in interviews, some of the “usual suspects” the Collaborative had been targeting in the past, such as the EPA, the Police, and the City Manager, tended to acknowledge the Collaborative’s expertise and moral righteousness.

That does not mean that credibility is of no concern for the organizers. For instance, on the evening in June that the local police chief recalled his earlier announcement that the Chelsea Police would not execute the Secure Communities Act, the credibility of the Collaborative’s Director, Angela, was publicly challenged. Wasn’t it she, who in May reassured the Chelsea people that she and the Chief of Police had come to agree on their dismissal of the S-COMM? Was that agreement not one of the foundations of their trip scheduled for the next day to attend the Community Policing Conference in New York City?

**Representation.** But also for organizers who work less in the public eye, credibility is an aspect of their professional mandate. It not only matters that people are listening to you as an organizer while rallying in the streets of Chelsea, but your message also has to be believable. What organizers associate credibility or believability with depends on whom you talk with. Looking at the interview data, a prominent dimension of credibility that emerges from the organizers’ reflections is the role they are playing or previously played in the community. In other words, their assessment about what makes them credible in the eyes of the community seems to rest strongly on their representation.

First of all, and not surprisingly in a predominantly Latino community, the fact that most of the organizers are of Latin-American descent is a major strength. It adds to Angela’s credibility when she defends the group of undocumented immigrants, because she herself comes from Puerto Rico. The same holds for Marina, also coming from Puerto Rico:

> “I am people of color, as well, and have, not at the same level, I have access to allocation and to information. But I have to work more; I have to prove that I am smart. Because when you have an accent, you are not from here; and then it’s not the same. I have some of the challenges that we have as immigrants.

Commonality, although highly implicit in character, and usually not overtly discussed in interviews, was picked up during informal exchanges; it is associated with the ethnic background of the organizers. A rough estimate concludes that 80 percent of the organizers originally have a Latin American or South American background. In a subtle way, this ethnic background of the organizers sometimes tended to be used as a significant asset – locally and regionally- in the Collaborative’s strategy. In fact, Angela, with Puerto Rican roots, hinted several times about her background, as part of her legitimacy. Her struggle to get control of the Collaborative, represents the struggle of the Latino people in Chelsea for a more responsive system of services provision with regard to education, labor, and housing. Also internally, at least two of the prominent organizers with a Latino background alluded to Angela’s formal and informal leadership in and outside the organization as having had a crucial impact on their professional development. Many Chelsea immigrants can familiarize themselves with most of the staff of the Collaborative, since they share the same ethnicity and history of social struggle.
Whether this impact could be attributed to a shared ethnic background, was a sensitive subject to address in the field research. Only in informal situations, and with a promise to keep disclosure anonymous, was the ethnic issue mentioned. For instance, one of the informants used it as a marker to distinguish between more reflective and more intuitive approaches to organizing. So, internally it does seem to matter. Externally, in a broader context of the highly politicized ethnic divide in the US, it might also be expected to be of importance. Illustrative for how ethnicity showed its relevance was how in the heat of the debate between the local police chief and Angela, she suddenly started to speak in Spanish, her native language and that of many of the people present.

Besides the notion of ethnic background as a form of commonality, spaces also tend to be associated with familiarity. Organizers seek familiar spaces or locations to find their constituencies. The preliminary rally to make people aware of the risks of the implementation of the Secure Community Act was in front of Chelsea’s city hall, nearby the central city’s bus stops. The yearly River Revel, a one-day festival is organized on the bridge between Chelsea and East Boston, leading to Logan Airport. It crosses the Chelsea Creek, and according to the organizers, is a familiar place for Chelsea people to come together on the weekends. During this day, a great variety of local associations set up their stands on the bridge, and boat rides are organized for the local people to get informed about the health hazards of the Creek. The day starts with a road race for school children, which creates the opportunity for the Collaborative to address health issues and the importance of physical activity.

For organizers such as Claire, on the other hand, credibility is closely connected to her former position as a City Council member. She admits it still plays a part. Her former political ties still impact her actual judgments with regard to strategy, tracing back to her professional and political successes and failures in the past. Read her doubts in this quote:

“So, like for example take the ’salt pile.’ When I was organizing the ’salt pile,’ I thought the ’salt pile’ was the devil. They’re violating the law, and they’re ignoring the community. This is what the community wants. They are just out to make money. Through the City Council, I could kind of see the other side. They own land; it’s ’zoned’ to have them there. We don’t know it’s … I really don’t think it’s harmful to … I don’t know. I swore before that I knew, now I don’t know. They’re not the worst business in this city. They’re not the worst business that’s ever been proposed by the city. I started to understand that part of it, why this business is important for Chelsea. (...) [M] why we should negotiate. Let’s understand that we can’t win this, and let’s get the best deal possible for the community.”

Leo associates his credibility as a community organizer with being a lifelong resident of Chelsea, but also a teacher and a man of science. Leo is an educated community leader, used to people listening to him and acknowledging his authority:

“I see my role as looking for accountability. Anything that goes, I want the private people to be accountable, I want the public people to be accountable. Things should go in a particular way that doesn’t screw people.”

In order for Annica, a young organizer with no previous linkage to the community, to be found credible, she must find a common theme that could connect her with the Chelsea people. She needs to build up her professional credibility from scratch, with only her professional experience to guide her. That experience informs her that she must have a political analysis in order to be believable:
“We can have a win together; we can win someone’s house back because we all supported them. But we can’t change the system that has oppressed people unless we have a shared analysis. So that’s why I do bring in my own politics into the work, and the people who are very involved share those politics.”

Annica’s reflection that involvement and credibility are closely connected to her political analysis might be seen as knitting the different associations around credibility together: credibility as commonality, either in background, affiliation, or political analysis. As we will see in § 6.5.4, how organizers handle that commonality, is crucial in the creation, sustainment and defense of professional credibility.

6.4.5. Summarizing the contextual constituents of professional legitimacy of the Chelsea Collaborative’s organizers

This section has explored the contextual dimension of professional legitimation. Central here was what the Chelsea organizers consider as the constituents of their legitimacy. Four building blocks for their professional mandate were identified: (1) The necessity of an audience; (2) Transition of participants into active agents, either individually or as part of running campaigns; (3) Embedding, the structure of activities as an expression of continuity; and (4) Commonality as the basis for professional credibility. These foundations of professional legitimacy have been further explored by examining the attributes that the organizers associated with these building blocks. The table below summarizes these associations. In the following section, the strategies and resources organizers account for to create, sustain and restore these building blocks will be further explored.

![Fig 6.1. Overview of the constituents of professional legitimacy of the Chelsea organizers](image)

6.5. The operational dimension: Strategies of professional legitimation in Chelsea.

In the previous section, we have explored the contextual dimension of professional legitimation. It examined what the Chelsea Collaborative’s organizers consider as foundations of their professional legitimacy. In terms of support, finding at first an initial audience to address local social issues,
has to be supported by an active engagement of community people, an engagement characterized by transition, or a form of increasing community control. Embedding, a third building block, anchors campaigns and other initiatives in the community on a longer term basis; and commonality in the cultural backgrounds, the ideas, and the experiences of the organizer and the community is a fourth element of credibility. Another insight, which emerged from the experiences and the reflections of the Chelsea organizers, is that their professional mandate is not a stable, fixed matter-of-fact state, but rather, it calibrates with their interactions with the Chelsea community. In other words, a professional mandate has to be “managed.” This management of legitimacy refers to the operational dimension of professional legitimation.

This study considers skillful management of professional legitimacy as reflected by the ability of organizers to react adequately to “variations in perceptions” (Ghere, 2011) that arise in the community during their professional engagement. “Adequately” means that organizers, first of all, have to stay in tune (or have to “re-tune” if necessary), with the interests, morals and cognitions of the community. The following sections describe how organizers obtain their professional mandate.

6.5.1. Nurturing as legitimation strategy to obtain audiences

As we saw in the previous section, organizers acquire passive support (“audience”) by finding and addressing potential participants, but they also must keep the attention of possible constituencies. Audiences are groups of people who are prepared to listen, and initially, that is what organizers are looking for. The organizers’ engagement needs to strike ground. How do organizers translate their own social engagement into a professional mandate? What do organizers do so that communities enable them to organize them into audiences?

In comparison with the Dutch Participation and Activation Employees, who tend to “calibrate” with the local mores to gain recognition as a professional, Chelsea organizers appear to employ a more comprehensive approach to finding audiences. In Amsterdam, professionals organize passive support by acknowledging that they are willing to connect and adhere to the moral codes and practices of the community – with the community as a presumed existing, almost institutional, entity recognizing the professional as an institutional entity as well. In Chelsea, on the other hand, organizers aim to turn the local community into an audience, a “community of concerned people.” This requires a specific strategy. As per definition, legitimacy management is a strategy to convert legitimating resources into legitimating capital (audience). What are the strategies of the Chelsea organizers to establish, maintain and eventually restore audiences, and what resources do they apply?

The strategy organizers apply to create audiences can be labeled as “nurturing.” This strategy derives its effectiveness by delivering a clear moral address to the participants, while at the same time, merging this with appeals to self-interest. Take Jimmy’s comment, for instance, when he was about to leave a situation where youngsters were working in a public garden. After assigning the young man who was nominated as Young Volunteer of the Year (disposition as resource) to supervise the works, he asked the other volunteers for an agreement upon the fact that the garden should be “ready for the weekend” (moral consequences). Consciously or unconsciously, Jimmy was negotiating his mandate, in this case, an extension of his mandate beyond his presence. In a figurative sense, Jimmy was “setting the stage” for an audience (the weekend event), with an implicit appeal to what is seen as a morally good technique (“continue the work”), structure (the supervising primus inter pares) and consequence (a clean park for the weekend). He did not leave any detailed instructions, allowing room for initiative by the young volunteers (influence as pragmatic resource).
Leo also used nurturing as a constituency-developing strategy. He did this by organizing debates between local politicians, project developers and local folks. He remembers one of the hearings at the Chelsea High School about the possible harmful health effects of asphalt on the community:

“So, we all went down to the public meeting; we had three hundred people to come down to the meeting. [...]. And everybody gets to get up to the microphone and say something. Now, when I went up to the microphone, I cut stuff that is researched. ‘This is why this is a bad idea.’ This is what is said... ‘We don’t need any more electricity, it’s coming in from Canada.’ So I said to the panel, that’s the officials who make the decisions, I said, ‘You should tell these people (...). This thing should be nowhere near a school, which is where they wanted it, idiots!'”

Another example of how a group of community people can be nurtured into concerned citizens is given by Annica:

“Well, I think that [...] the focus is not to bring in my analysis immediately, but to spend a lot of time listening. And I see that compared with other organizers, with my colleagues, that I think I do spend more time because of this kind of organizing I was taught to do. I just ask people questions about their lives and listening to their story and trying to hear what they’re saying about what they see about the world and the government and their lives. [...] It’s always a really hard balance to try to figure out how much of our own personal politics do we put into the work, and also really leaving space to make sure we’re not pushing people to a space that isn’t comfortable for them or isn’t really accurate.”

Actually, Annica chooses not to see her possible constituents as merely recipients of a message of change. Instead, she listens, and tries to let people themselves make sense of the world they live in. Maybe later, the political analysis can enter the conversation. She admits this is the way she was trained in “relational organizing,” but her initial reservation to explicitly position herself as an organizer is more than a methodological choice.

Grounding. Grounding makes use of moral resources for the creation of audiences. Let’s first consider the moral resources that organizers might tap into in order to find and attract audiences. Moral resources are “ways of being and doing” that the local community finds valuable. According to legitimacy theory, social actors can turn themselves into legitimate entities by converting these valued ways of being and doing into goals (or consequences), actions (or techniques), and forms of organizing (or structures) that fit. So, if organizers in Chelsea initiate a rally in the city center in order to attract audiences for informing about the upcoming implementation of the Secure Communities Act, they try to create a fit on the level of goals and actions, as well as of structures. It is the right thing to pursue an informed community (goal) about an issue that will affect them. A rally is a right way of organizing in the US at large. However, this also is true in Latin American countries, where public rallies are a widely accepted and valued tactic to raise voice against injustices. A rally is, by the way, also a fitting form of organizing, as it enables people passing by to assess from the outside whether the subject is of concern for them. If so, they will probably stop and listen and possibly join; or they might consider joining the rally the next time. Earlier, responsiveness was one of the challenges mentioned by community organizers in the creation of audiences. A rally inviting people to later join a public meeting facilitates a kind of responsiveness required to create a strong and enduring constituency.

Cultivation. One of the techniques in the nurturing strategy is cultivation, a strategy of combining moral and pragmatic resources. An example is the way the Collaborative organizes a part of their initial contacts at the reception area in the headquarters on Broadway. In a city where people do not
always feel safe on the streets, either because of street crime or because of potential racial profiling by the police, the large windows and glass doors at the entrance creates an inviting atmosphere (pragmatic: disposition). The Collaborative also appeared committed to welcoming visitors personally (moral: techniques), so whenever possible, staff members either were standing behind the desk or rushing towards the door when the bell rang. The information behind the window with regard to voter registration, the Youth Summer Jobs Program, and other useful announcements, also might contribute to accessibility of the organization and its activities (pragmatic: exchange).

A second example of cultivation that mixes moral and pragmatic resources, is given by Gina, Head of CUDE. She uses a simple but effective “trick”: organize meetings around dinner time, so that local folks can enjoy a meal provided by the Collaborative (pragmatic resources: exchange), but also acknowledges an important feature of the local culture - the mixture of eating and meeting (moral: techniques). It gives the meetings a festive, informal character as well. Gathering around mealtimes also allows the parents to leave their homes and bring their children with them.

Feeding. Feeding refers to a form of nurturing on the basis of pragmatic resources. Looking back on a “lost cause” due to her loss of a large part of her constituency in the revolt against the campaign to cover the salt pile, Claire learned the value of being responsive to what the community could win with their engagement. But not only that, she also learned that self-interest could represent a strong incentive for people becoming engaged. It brings in the pragmatic resources organizers sometimes require to nurture audiences: “What is in it for me” (Often abbreviated as WIIFM in the U.S.). Both Annica and Claire, but also Leo, realize the value of self-interest in order to get people to become involved. Annica, as she understands the efficacy of “relational organizing” is asking people questions about their concerns. Claire acknowledges the importance of WIIFM, as she recognizes that it was clearly not in the self-interest of many people to cover a relatively small salt pile with a large new building blocking the view of the waterfront. Finally, Leo was aware of local residents’ deep desire for a healthy environment, when he posed critical questions to members of an environmental justice panel. At the same time, one can ask oneself whether people’s desire to share stories is just a pragmatic resource. The same question can be posed about the valuation of a view of the waterfront or about their concerns for pollution free air. These are all interests that concern people’s pursuit of a “good life.”

However, there also is a dispositional element, a characteristic of the Collaborative as an organization that nourishes Chelsea audiences. Organizers who want to address social issues can develop a mandate that is based upon their concern for the families in Chelsea. Exemplary are the Collaborative’s efforts to develop parks as playgrounds for children. Similarly, they nourish audiences by their actions to improve public schools as places of opportunity for children to eventually become part of the American middle class.

In a more controversial manner, their support of the transgender victim of assault, also exemplifies their family-oriented disposition. When the Catholic funding organization asked the Collaborative to adhere to the Church’s doctrine on heterosexuality, they refused. In a predominant Latino community such as Chelsea is, advocating for equal rights for LGBT-people is not without controversy. The family is still a cornerstone for social and cultural relations in the community, and propagating sexual diversity at first sight does not fit well into the mores of the Collaborative’s constituency. Interestingly enough, it was indeed an appeal to family values that Angela utilized to legitimize the stance of the Collaborative against the restrictive sexual policy of the Catholic Church and the ignorance of the local police force. “Everybody has homosexual relatives,” Angela explained. “So when somebody of a non-heterosexual orientation was harassed and the police decided not to take action, we were able to connect to that experience.”
In sum: A dominant feature of the legitimating strategies organizers use to build and sustain audiences seems to be the nurturing of possible constituencies. While in early stages of the contacts between organizers and community members this nurturing has elements of grounding (looking for a moral “fit” between the organizers’ concerns and the community), later a more cultivating approach seems to be adopted, mixing moral resources (“the just thing to do”) with the self-interest of possible participants. In more established audiences, feeding strategies based on the self-interest of people tend to be dominant.

### 6.5.2. Yielding as legitimation strategy to obtain transition

Once a possible constituency has been turned into an audience, the Collaborative’s organizers are looking for opportunities to transfer control of the organizing process to the participants. This transfer process is a firm component of what organizers experience as their professional mandate: their ability to support the transformation of ideas and behavior. Secondly, it also concerns the evocation of a sense of ownership among the people who have become active in campaigns.

By transforming from an attention-creating modus into a facilitating one, the professional relationship changes: seemingly, the organizer is taking a step back, and facilitating the constituency to take control. The audience becomes the actor. In § 6.4.2, several examples of strategic concerns to create active support have been highlighted. Managing active support for the organizing activities requires a focus on how to connect people, as well as on how to expand the running initiative. Apparently, both the strength and the width of the initiative are paramount for the decision of the organizer to transfer control.

What are the rationales of the Chelsea organizers to change position and maintain this altered position? After all, once active support for running campaigns has been established, professional involvement does not necessarily decrease. On the contrary, it seems that the organizer experiences active support as a new stage, with a different kind of interplay between him, the campaign, and the constituency.

**Knowledge distribution.** One of the first elements of the yielding strategy seems to be knowledge distribution. Knowledge apparently becomes a legitimizing resource for active support as it stimulates community control. The more people become involved in campaigns, the more knowledgeable they have to become about their environment and the systemic roots of their problems. Knowledge distribution is a legitimizing capability: organizers acknowledge the importance of cognitive resources in different ways. For instance, for Annica, her professional legitimacy lies in the stage of transferring control to the community in the development of a shared analysis:

“We can have a win together; we can win someone’s house back, because we all supported them. But we can’t change the system that has oppressed people unless we have a shared analysis.”

Claire, with lifelong local roots, emphasizes how important it is for her as an organizer to have a broad shared knowledge base:

“I would say: this person believes this way, that person believes that way. It was information that I provided to the community, but I didn’t do it by myself. That was the important thing. We had a whole team of organizers who were working on this campaign.”

Leo remembers how he realized the importance of knowledge in the transfer from the Green Space initiative to grow flowers and trees in the parks to the local residents:
“[..] [We] got a hold of someone who knew about planting and showed us exactly what to do and how deep to dig the holes. And how to take the plants out of pots and put them in the hole and all of that. So, we did the same thing when we planted trees. We got an arborist to come down and show us, ‘This is how you plant a tree.’”

Marina, also working as an organizer for Green Space, acknowledges the importance of transferring knowledge for people to take control:

“If you don’t know things, you will not work to change that, if you don’t have the knowledge. People need to have the impact of that information that here is something. In this kind of community, we don’t have the same access to information.”

Change will not come “if you don’t know things” (Marina). Cognitive resources indeed can become legitimizing capabilities for organizers once knowledge touches the ground. For example, inclusion of community members going out and gathering knowledge about the mortgage system in the US, or organizers asking a gardener to explain how to plant flowers and trees. In order to stimulate local people to act as informed citizens after the implementation of the Secure Community Act, the Collaborative held a public hearing in the Chelsea High School: “What are the rights of the undocumented immigrants, and what are the ‘dos and don’ts’ of the local police when approaching people on the street who have not apparently violated the law?”

Energizing. The question is whether organizers are able to transfer the control of campaigns in more ways than merely making sure that knowledge is spread among the constituents. A certain sensibility for the more pragmatic motives of people to become organized also seems to be required. There must be appeals to self-interest, or the need to have influence on the running of the campaigns. What does it take to be able to continue to be seen as a supportive partner while the personal prominence of the organizer decreases? When studying the reflections of the organizers, a number of pragmatic legitimizing resources emerge.

First, organizers do tend to be aware of the energizing effect that appeals to self-interest can have on their ability to create a “tipping point” towards community control. Strikingly, what would account for “exchange legitimacy” according to legitimacy theorists, is never only materialistic. It’s not about just gain or profit. On the contrary, in reflections, organizers do identify pragmatic considerations that support their presence as a professional. However, in general these considerations transcend the direct material gain as a source that legitimizes their more “subjunctive” role. Unlocking needs and worries, Claire explains about her position vis a vis her constituency. Annica identifies a search for community or understanding in her CTA-volunteers. According to Xavier, pragmatic resources of the Collaborative are reflected in:

“... the support that it directly or indirectly offers the community, and I think that that would be related to how the Collaborative supports any specific individual based on their needs.”

Leo recounts his direct experience concerning how successful outcomes can enable the organizer to take on a less explicit position. For instance, he comments on the prominence acquired by the people whom he has previously engaged to take care of the landscaping of the Chelsea Creek:

“So, it’s a community effort and it becomes a community effort and people feel a sense of accomplishment. ‘Hey, I helped make this!’”

Nevertheless, under the surface of this successful experience, rests another resource that allows him to “yield”. While reflecting on how he got the local people involved - an involvement that
eventually led to a sense of ownership - he acknowledges the importance of organizing influence. After he found a private company that would develop a pro bono plan for the Chelsea Creek, he organized trips with Chelsea people to visit landscaped creeks in Boston. Once there, everyone present was open to suggestions from the visitors:

“Maybe ten people from the Collaborative would go in there and you know, ‘What would you like to see?’”

Organizers regularly mentioned explicitly, the process of granting the community influence as a pragmatic resource. Although they did not literally call it “giving influence,” nevertheless the ability to let people become involved in the course of action, was named as one of the legitimations for what—at least overtly- appeared to be taking a step back in campaigns. For Annica, giving influence is almost literally giving “voice” - helping to make explicit the motives for people to become active in the CTA:

“Like in our retreats and in our leadership meeting, I’ll ask people, ‘What’s a moment when you felt really powerful this year?’ or ‘What’s one way you think you’ve changed in your work with CTA?’”

According to Olivia, being able to link the motives of the local people to the goal of the campaigns is something crucial for an organizer:

“What is it in the organization that we can get them, hook them [...]?”

Olivia’s reflection signifies more than simply an organizer’s concern about accommodating a constituency to become active. Her thoughts also raise the issue of “comfort” as an attribute that could legitimize the transition of control from the organizer to the active community members. The positive disposition the Collaborative and its professionals assume to possess –In the eyes of the people they work for – might be of considerable support during the transfer of control.

**Warning: Moral sentiments.** When Collaborative organizers were looking for professional legitimacy in situations of active support by the community, an appeal to “right or wrong” (moral resources) was less prominent than attempts to connect to pragmatic motives. In fact, only a few reflections give account of moral issues, and in most cases, they point to situations that threatened the legitimacy of the organizer. This was the case when Claire decided to move on with her fight against the planned salt pile, even though she had lost support by the community. Looking back, she acknowledges that she followed the “wrong” procedure, since she did not include the voice of the community in her strategy.

In sum, one of the characteristic strategies organizers apply for “transformation of control” is a form of yielding. Yielding is not merely a matter of leaning back and letting the participants take charge. On the contrary, it requires an active endeavor by the organizer to ensure that the number of fully engaged local people expands, and that stronger mutual connections are developed. In order to facilitate that “a sense of ownership” develops among the participants, organizers also make sure people become knowledgeable about the social and political backgrounds of the problems they try to attack. They must develop expertise about effective strategies to be applied. Besides knowledge distribution, organizers also tend to engage in an energizing role, to stimulate ownership. This role entails a mix of appeals to the participants’ self-interest, the expansion of communities’ influence, and also the creation of comfort.
6.5.3. Arranging as legitimation strategy to obtain embedding

Continuity, or embedding as it emerged as a building block for the Chelsea organizers, reflects the “temporal” dimension of the organizer’s mandate with the community. How can the organizer secure his long-term professional commitment with his constituency? Some campaigns take time to eventually deliver results. For instance, the rights of homeowners to foreclosure mediation in one of the CTA’s campaigns, required months of protests, calling congressmen and congresswomen, and the use of press contacts. Sustaining Green Space’s resistance against the transport of Ethanol by train, required that organizers such as Marina and Claire were able to embed their professional involvement. Sometimes, mutual commitments between organizers and volunteers have to be reaffirmed or reinforced, and often a new basis needs to be established for the collaboration, as momentum and situations change. For instance, this was seen during the debate in the Chelsea High School, when Angela was publicly and unexpectedly confronted with a Chelsea police chief who renounced his alleged promise not to cooperate with the Secure Communities Act. As a result, she had to act in order to secure the continuation of her professional mandate to campaign with the Chelsea people against the possible human rights threats of the S-Comm. That mandate was partly based on her public announcement that she had come to an agreement with the Chelsea Police that in their city, undocumented immigrants would not be asked for their documents.

Claire, on the other hand, experienced discontinuity in her professional legitimacy as an organizer when she went on to pursue her resistance against the continuing operational procedures of a company that maintained a salt pile on the Chelsea waterfront. As reported in section (§ 6.4.3), Chelsea organizers associate the continuity of their mandate with structure, based on bonds between organizer and volunteers, co-ownership of the participants, successful experiences, and focus. But also the organization and its resources ensure embedding in ongoing activities.

Consciousness development. In order to keep their professional mandate alive, organizers invest in developing the consciousness of their volunteers. Leo gives an account of the importance of knowledge in the following quote about the great educational efforts of Green Space:

“Trees and parks and flowers, you learn some stuff. And we have a lot of youngsters that do stuff like traffic counts, because we have a lot a [...]. This is a major industrial area. So there are a lot of big trucks that go through here on the way to the airport. Not necessarily the best thing for neighborhoods.”

Green Space not only provides the Chelsea youth with facts about nature, but the platform also stimulates youngsters to become fact-finders themselves to learn about and document environmental problems in the city. For instance, the youth gain awareness about local pollution by counting the number of trucks that enter Chelsea. But at the same time, these counting activities strengthen their connection to the long-term environmental campaigns of the Collaborative. Facts and knowledge on environmental issues seem to function as “markers” for a continuing engagement between organizer and participants. The provision of these markers makes the environment knowledgeable and converts the environmental resources into a legitimating resource for the organizer.

Accentuation. Besides knowledge as a cognitive resource, pragmatic resources also seem to contribute to the durability of the professional engagement. During the earlier mentioned incident at the Chelsea High School with the Police Chief, Angela was forced to manage her challenged legitimacy as an organizer. Not only her credibility (see next section), but also her ability to keep Chelsea citizens engaged with the Collaborative was challenged. One of her concerns was whether she would travel the next day with him to New York for the Annual Community Police Awards ceremony. The
prospect that she would have to endorse the Chelsea Police Chief in New York suddenly became problematic. The chief of police changed from an asset into a liability. What could she do to reverse that situation?

"Until now," she began her reply on stage, "you gave no clear answer. And what I hear you saying is something very different than what you made known to me a few weeks ago." A bit coolly, she concluded, "From now on, the fight between the Chelsea Collaborative and the Chelsea Police is opened."

Her reaction was an attempt to restore what she saw as, among others, a possible challenge to her ability to launch a more structured educational campaign around S-Comm. The openly declared battle with the Chelsea Police started with her leaving the next morning for a flight with the Police Chief to New York, but not until after she assured everyone in the Collaborative that she would use the trip to confront him with his actions the night before.

This incident reveals a potential relationship between the durability of the organizers’ work and the character of the organization. How does the organization and its professionals deal with challenging, difficult situations? By accentuating the difference between the Police Force and the Collaborative, Angela apparently aimed to restore the organization’s positive “disposition” to choose the side of the local immigrant community in times of doubt. This positive disposition refers to the Collaborative as a forceful advocate for people’s rights, such as tenants’ rights and the rights of LGBT’s.

Linking. In contrast to accentuation, which positions the organizer across from a possible non-cooperative force, linking stands to extend the professional mandate. This reflects the ability to engage in long-term arrangements. One of those arrangements is the collaboration between the Collaborative, local food storage businesses, power suppliers, and the Environment Protection Agency. This collaboration aims to structurally reduce local emission of toxics by the local food distribution centers. Until a few years ago, these fruit and vegetable distribution centers used to literally “extend” their storage capacity by adding cargo space for diesel trucks. The cooling system of those cargo trucks used to run on red diesel, polluting the area with more than 400 carcinogens as the truck engines remained running in order to refrigerate the produce they carried. Allegedly, this caused a considerable rise in cancer, heart and respiratory diseases in Chelsea over the years. The Collaborative asked for assistance from the federal and state Environmental Protection Agencies, but also asked energy corporations to facilitate the process whereby local distributors could invest in an electricity-run cargo space. This “linking” led to a financial support system, managed by the Collaborative’s Green Space Coalition. Green Space divides government funds among the local distributors who are willing to replace the diesel-run cooling systems with electricity-run systems. By providing financial support for these replacements, there exists a long-term arrangement with the local distributors that surely also has a basis in self-interest. But Margareth, one of the organizers responsible for running that project, is at the same time also a member of the Chelsea Health Commission. This grants her official access to the local distribution centers’ localities and their official documents.

Margareth’s political function, as member of the Chelsea Health Board, links her mandate as an organizer working in long-term arrangements with distribution companies, governmental actors such as the EPA, and other local health organizations. After all, it gives her political leverage to push the local storage facilities into the use of environmentally friendly cooling devices. Simultaneously, the political mandate gives durability to her functioning as an organizer. In a meeting of the Green Space Coalition, she notably reported about her efforts to promote environmental issues, such as the use of chemically neutral fertilizers in the Chelsea parks.

The conversion program for the red diesel cooling systems, and the Youth Summer Jobs program exemplify both the importance of linking – either in policy or in funding - as a resource that
helps to continue the involvement between the organizer and the community organization on one side, and the community members and stakeholders on the other. In different words, in Chelsea, we see the linking of a legitimating resource to embed the engagement of professionals on a longer term. Moreover, it seems that attached to that structural embedding, other pragmatic resources also are required. In reflections, organizers tend to remark about the importance of rewards. Christina, working with immigrant laborers, has this commitment as she supports them in trying to get back wages which their employers still owe them - an embedding in a judicial procedure. On the other hand, Annica develops a long-term professional relationship by keeping engaged with the lives of the members of the CTA, and from time to time, she has a successful result, such as the “Tenants Law.” Leo labels this fusion of structural approaches with successful experiences as creating a “yoyo-effect”:

“Step number one: if you can convince everybody to recycle, right away there’s less trash. If you can get more and more recycling, things get better. If you can get more trees and more grass and more open space, it’s better for the community, because there’s more air to breathe. Trees soak up pollution, [as] they sequester it. That’s even better, because we live in a city where we have gigantic problems with asthma because it’s an industrial type area. So every tree that we plant is just a little better. The kids have some place to go, they can’t... you know, hanging around on street corners is not the best way to run a summer. Summer Youth Employment, we do that, parks for the kids and playgrounds, slides and swings and vegetable gardens; we have several community gardens around the city. People can come, plant tomatoes, cucumbers; we have harvests. Each little thing makes it a little bit better.”

Here Leo sketches a form of circularity that underlies some of the approaches of the Green Space Coalition. The quote above, illustrates his strategic consciousness of how to pave a road to structural mutual involvement between the organizer and the community. Activities are embedded in the structured approach of Green Space, combining the specific activities with concrete gains (recycling leads to clean streets), while also offering a wide arrangement of facilities (Summer Youth Program and community gardens) that produce short and long-term rewards (parks and health).

In sum, to secure long-term engagement with volunteers and other supportive parties, organizers apply different types of arranging-strategies. Consciousness raising efforts, such as educational workshops and research activities, embeds knowledge in the local networks of participants. In addition, a second strategy that organizers apply is to accentuate the positive disposition of the organization. Thirdly, and somewhat oppositional to the former, is structural linking of different initiatives that create durable strategies.

6.5.4. Integrating as legitimation strategy to obtain commonality

So far, the strategies of organizers to handle situations of professional legitimacy have been described insofar as they were connected to finding audiences for local concerns (passive support), transforming control in campaigns (active support), and securing long-term commitments (continuity). For the description of the fourth type of legitimacy challenge, commonalities, a number of cases from the Collaborative’s practices have been selected. These cases are exemplary for how organizers legitimize themselves in situations of building, sustaining and restoring credibility. In one case, the Green Space’s campaign against the placement of a salt pile on the Chelsea waterfront led to the questioning of Claire’s commitment as a local organizer/politician. A second case, the activities surrounding the implementation of S-COMM in Chelsea, unanticipatedly lost credibility in the midst of
the public eye when a crucial local ally – the Chief of Police - hesitated to repeat publicly what he had declared in an email to Angela. The Catholic Caritas’ threat to withdraw funding, forced the Collaborative to speak out for sexual diversity, knowing its constituency holds strong, traditional family values. And there is Annica, a relative outsider, highly educated, working with predominantly immigrant families, looking for ways to position herself as a “relational” and “formally educated organizer.”

These cases each drove the organizers to manage, or deal with “variations in perceptions” in their direct environment, including colleagues and the community. They had to account informally and publicly for their actions as organizers. How does an organizer assure or re-assure the community that his position, as well as his professional commitment, is in accordance with their interests, values or viewpoints? This explicit assurance or re-assurance, implies a discursive form of accountability - discursive because it is done in a dialogue with the organizer’s environment, a dialogue that “re-anchors” him in the organizing process.

Analytically, legitimacy management is being described by examining “discursive” resources which organizers draw on when their credibility has been under threat. More precisely, we will see what resources organizers draw on in their discursive strategies in order to create, sustain and eventually restore their professional representation, thereby defending the role they fulfill in the local community. In what follows, we consecutively consider pragmatic, moral, and cognitive resources that can legitimize the commitment and the role of the organizer.

Fraternizing as the discursive use of pragmatic and moral resources. Pragmatic discursive resources enable the organizer to obtain credibility by a form of accommodation. According to legitimacy theorists, pragmatic resources can be drawn from “good” character (disposition), added value (exchange), or the willingness to grant the people they are engaged with voice in the design of ongoing activities (influence). This fraternizing creates a fit between the activities of the organizer and the environment. In the analysis of the pragmatic resources that organizers apply, the “dispositional” resources are striking, especially the ones that positively emphasize the characteristics of the organizer as a person. Usually, similarities between the organizer and the constituency are being accentuated. A shared ethnic background, a shared local history, a shared biography, a shared vision, or a shared experience – these types of similarities seem to be resources that help to make a “connection” in order to accommodate. One strategy to accommodate is “fraternizing.” Hereby, the disposition of the organizer especially is being accentuated.

The following excerpt from an interview shows how Marina, originally from a rural area in Puerto Rico, makes use of references to her background (disposition) to fraternize with Chelsea residents. Note that although she refers to “we,” she was at that time living in South Boston:

“I am people of color, as well. I have access to allocation and to information, but I have to work more. I have to prove that I am smart. Because when you have an accent, you are not from here, and then it’s not the same. I have some of the challenges that we have as immigrants with that background, coming from Puerto Rico, with a rural background.”

This fraternizing form of discursiveness is especially visible in the last remarks, when Marina refers to commonalities: “I am people of color as well”; “I have to prove that I am smart”; “Because when you have an accent.” Her shared background is used as a pragmatic resource. It proves that she shares her disposition with many of the Chelsea immigrants to overcome the language barrier, to prove their abilities, to struggle to be taken seriously despite a rural background.

Another event, where this fraternizing legitimacy strategy was applied, was during the community campaign surrounding the implementation of the Secure Communities Act. On the evening of the debate, aspects of both the creation, the loss, as well of the defense, of credibility became visible
thereby illustrating the working of this fraternizing strategy. To kick off the earlier mentioned debate at the Chelsea High School, Sal DiDominico was invited as keynote speaker. He is one of the State Senators from Massachusetts. With the people gathered, he shared his memories about how his grandfather once took off from Italy by boat, leaving behind his mother at the pier. He spoke about how America is founded upon histories like his own, of people leaving their beloved ones in search for a better future. “You're like my grandfather. You all have burned bridges behind you, and like my grandfather, you deserve a fair chance in America.” Applause followed.

The Senator’s keynote endorsed not only the credibility of the campaign, but also the prominent role of Angela as organizer and leader of the debate that evening. What strengthened her credibility as the organizer, was the fusion of the experiences of the people present, the undocumented immigrants in Chelsea, the experiences of the senator, and her own personal life story as daughter of an immigrant. It created a sense of familiarity, bolstering the Collaborative’s engagement with an extra touch of legitimacy. A representative from a coalition of immigrant rights advocates explained the risks involved with the implementation of the S-Comm, and - of course- the local chief of police, was invited to elaborate on his e-mail to Angela that he “… would not allow the people of Chelsea to be victims of racial profiling.”

Later in the evening, the apparent support of the police chief for the Collaborative’s efforts to minimize the negative local impact of the S-Comm turned out to be a challenge of the recently established credibility. Asked to repeat publicly what he allegedly promised in an earlier e-mail to Angela, he hesitated. She attempted a number of times to let him repeat his promise, but eventually she failed that evening to get the police chief to acknowledge that he would not cooperate with federal authorities on S-Comm. His statement that nobody should feel threatened by S-Comm, as long as they did not violate the law, was nothing more than formalistic. Angela was hardly able to hide her disappointment in front of the public. Her credibility was at stake. Moreover, the next morning she would travel with him to New York to endorse him for the Community Policing Awards.

What did Angela do to restore her credibility? She continued with an attack on the credibility of the Chief of Police, in agitated modus, but more strikingly, she switched from English to Spanish, despite the fact that there were translators present.

This fraternizing strategy (“the good we share”) was also applied by the Collaborative as a whole to the Catholic Caritas threat to withdraw funding. After the Collaborative scrutinized the Chelsea police for a lack of progress in the investigation following the assault on a transgender Latino, the Church’s representatives expressed their worries about the adherence of the Collaborative to the Catholic doctrine on sexuality. Surprisingly, however, the Collaborative was able to mobilize considerable dissent in the Latino community about the recent increase of gay bullying in Chelsea. Almost every family of Latin American descent in town knew somebody in the family who had fallen victim to LGBT-related violence or had lost a family member as a result of AIDS. Organizing those collective experiences, enhanced the credibility of the Collaborative to speak out, and even start a campaign for equal sexual rights in a local LGBT-coalition.

In another situation, fraternizing can be used as a legitimating strategy of the organizer sharing a practice with local politicians, such as Claire. She manages her legitimacy in the political realms by consciously applying “political tactics”:

“[That is] what politicians sometimes feel like: the people in the community are crazy or they are not articulate. They can’t voice their vision peacefully, calmly, because they get upset, they get enraged. So, they look for one person to be like the grounded person. So, sometimes I feel like I play that role, where I could be the grounded person, who negotiates, who talks, but still works for the community. Be their voice. Be the one to play the political game.”
**Universalizing.** A second type of integrating strategy is “universalizing” the commonalities of the organizers and the local people. Characteristic of this strategy is the application of moral resources. This strategy aims to create and restore commonality, a bond between the organizer and the community, based on shared features, such as background or experience. In this instance, it is a tool to connect the strategies and campaigns to a broader, global context. For Marina, the contribution of her background to her professional mandate is evident, and she applies that background to universalize. Reflecting on how she establishes that sense of universality in her work on environmental justice with the Green Space Coalition-volunteers Marina comes to the following insight:

“That is the thing, the experience how to translate experience, or my experience in different areas, were most like not even, but then when I moved here, where I go to work? I need to work. Always, justice is part of my ideas and when you see related with environment that some communities in US, low-income communities and communities of color, they don’t have the same rights about a healthy environment. That was the door for me, its natural resources, its people and its justice, and how we work together to improve that environment, with the same idea.”

In this quote, the universalizing strategy is exemplified in her connection between experiences as an immigrant and the experience of other communities (“of color”). In a similar way, the Collaborative was able to “universalize” her stand in the conflict with the Catholic Caritas organization with regard to her position on LGBT-rights. In a predominantly traditional cultural community with regard to family values, this stand could have challenged the “sense of communality” of the Collaborative’s mandate. Moreover, the Catholic Church still has its own, distinct moral legitimacy among the many Latino families in Chelsea. However, the Collaborative defended her position with a reference to a universal principle, when Angela declared, “It was the Human Rights thing to do.”

In sum, in order to create, sustain and restore commonality, Chelsea organizers use integrating strategies, linking the lives, experiences, and characteristics of the different people affected and involved. This is either done by fraternizing (“the good we all share”), or by universalizing (“we all are entitled to enjoy fundamental human rights.”)
6.5.5. Summary of the legitimation strategies of the Chelsea community organizers

Table 6.2 summarizes the legitimation strategies, according to the constituents of the professional mandate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTITUENTS OF PROFESSIONAL MANDATE</th>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>VARIATIONS</th>
<th>LEGITIMATION RESOURCES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>Grounding</td>
<td>Moral</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultivating</td>
<td>Pragmatic + Moral</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Feeding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>Yielding</td>
<td>Distributing knowledge</td>
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<td>Energizing</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
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<td>Embeddings</td>
<td>Arranging</td>
<td>Consciousness raising</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
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<td>Linking</td>
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<td>Commonality</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Fraternizing</td>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Universalizing</td>
<td>Pragmatic + Moral</td>
</tr>
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Table 6.2. Overview of the legitimation strategies and their resources, linked to the respective constituents of legitimacy, reported by the Chelsea organizers

6.6. General summary of the findings in this chapter

In this chapter, the constituents of professional legitimacy have been explored, as well as the legitimation strategies of the Chelsea organizers. Chelsea Collaborative, home-base of the organizers, is a comprehensive grass-roots community organization. Chelsea, an industrial urban area near Boston, can be characterized as an immigrant city, with a majority of people from a Latino background. Due to the fact that a great many of the immigrants lack official documents, they are vulnerable to abuse of their civil rights, as well as to abuse of their rights as a child, parent, laborer, homeowner or tenant. Within a limited and punitive federal system of social, legal and financial support, the Chelsea organizers not only try to raise awareness and provide education, but they also put great efforts into mobilization to address and repair structural systemic injustices.

First, the contextual dimension of professional legitimation was examined. Exploring the constituents of the organizers’ professional mandate yielded the following:

The first constituent of the organizers’ mandate is audience. Audience refers to a form of initial, passive support, associated with a number of conditions. For organizers to find and develop audiences, access is crucial. For instance, access to local people means being considerate about a convenient time and place for awareness-raising activities. A second association with audience is anticipation, especially about local urgent issues. Safety is also an important condition to reach and develop audiences, with the high level of crime in mind.
The second constituent, associated with a more amplified form of support, is *transition*. This refers to a situation where organizers are able to transfer the control of the organizing process to the volunteers. Signs of such a transition are role changing behavior of the people involved, a growing mutual connection, and an expansion in size of the organizing process. In addition, organizers also associate transition with an emerging sense of ownership among the volunteers, and the emergence of new narratives about their position.

The third constituent of professional legitimacy was associated by the organizers with *embedding*. This refers to the continuity of their professional involvement. Essential for this embedding of their engagement with the local residents is the development of co-ownership of the organizing process, but also the deliberate creation of success experiences, rooting and focusing the involvement on a more long-term basis. Another essential component is the alignment of the organization, the Chelsea Collaborative, by providing staff, means, and networks for running campaigns.

The fourth and last constituent of the Chelsea organizers’ professional legitimacy explored in this chapter is *commonality*. This expresses a form of credibility, crucial to be able to work as an organizer, involved in local issues. This commonality is based on a number of associations with professional credibility, such as a commonality in background (most organizers are from Latin origin) or experiences. This enlarges their representational value, as they address social issues in the community. It also enables a deeper involvement.

This chapter also presented the analysis of the operational dimension of professional legitimation in the organizing practices in the Chelsea Collaborative. Linked to each of these four constituents of professional legitimacy are the following legitimation strategies. These strategies, outlined in this chapter, are based on the reconstruction by the Chelsea organizers of the way they manage challenges of legitimacy. These strategies are a result of professional deliberation. Pragmatic, moral and/or cognitive resources already present in the context are weighed. In this deliberation, there are possible conversion factors to enhance legitimacy, and consequently to enable community development professionals to be, to act and to relate in a professional capacity.

The first legitimation strategy is linked to the management of audiences. This has been labeled as *nurturing*. The nurturing strategy supports the organizers to develop and sustain audiences in different ways: first, by grounding the organizers in the life world of the local people, that is, they seek connection with “valued ways of being and doing” of their possible future constituents. Secondly, nurturing takes place by means of cultivating the audiences. This is done by linking the actions of the organizers to the moral and pragmatic concerns of the local people, so they get “hooked” to goals that support their social, political and economic empowerment. A third form of nurturing, is feeding, which is a strategy whereby the Chelsea Collaborative and its organizers contribute very tangibly to the community, for instance, through the development of parks, or by legal support.

The second legitimation strategy, labeled as *yielding*, relates to the process of transition of original constituents into active participants, developing ownership of the organizing process. This yielding strategy has been associated with the transfer of knowledge to the participants, so they can develop ownership regarding the analyses underpinning their actions. Furthermore, in their efforts to create and support processes of transition, organizers are keen to provoke new energy in the active group of people. For instance, they may do this by increasingly granting them influence, and providing them a sense of comfort as their involvements grows.

The third legitimation strategy, one that is aimed at securing the embedding of the organizer in the life world of his constituency, has been labeled as *arranging*. For instance, one of the forms of arranging which was identified entailed consciousness raising by providing education. This embeds
the knowledge of the organization locally. Also associated with this arranging strategy is the positive labeling of the Chelsea Collaborative as an organization, thereby demarcating it from an environment that not always acts in the interest of the local people. A third aspect of arranging has been found in the structural linking of different initiatives of the Collaborative with external parties (coalitions, government actors), so that durability can be secured.

The fourth legitimation strategy is linked to the development and support of a sense of commonality. This was labeled as the *integrating* strategy. Characteristic of this integrating strategy is a form of linking; this works by involving the experiences and the features of the Collaborative’s constituencies with the experiences of the organizers. One type of linking is fraternizing, emphasizing the positive experiences and traditions which organizers and community members share. A second type of linking is universalizing, a way of legitimation that integrates the positive and negative experiences of local people into a universal narrative, such as basic human rights.

6.7. *The Context-Mechanism-Outcome pattern of the Chelsea organizers’ professional legitimation*

**CONTEXT:** Legitimation management by the Chelsea community organizers has to account for, and consequently derive, its legitimating resources from the strong tradition of civil society and local governance, and also from the restrictive and punitive constraints of social policy. Furthermore, in processes of legitimation the organizers politicize the developmental needs of the local people. Their professional status is linked to practices of local and supra-local coalition building.

**MECHANISM:** To obtain professional legitimacy, the community organizers apply different legitimation strategies. These strategies can be summarized either as *nurturing, yielding, arranging, and integrating*. Each of these strategies are aimed to create specific professional legitimate functionings.

**OUTCOME:** these legitimation strategies produce constituents of professional legitimacy by the Chelsea organizers that can be characterized either as *audience, transition/transformation, embedding and commonality*. 
Chapter 7. Area leaders as primus inter pares: The professional legitimacy of locality-based community workers in Doornkop

A central feature of community development in Doornkop is the focus on economic empowerment, based on the mobilization of neighborhood people. Twelve community workers of Child Aid Doornkop each oversee one of the residential blocks, and put great effort into mobilizing the residents to become involved in income generating projects, home gardening and skills development programs. In an area suffering from poverty, poor health, and the burdens of the Apartheid history, these area leaders are well aware of the value of the background they share with the residents. Living by example, they represent a perspective of personal growth.

7.1. Doornkop, a challenged settlement at the outskirts of Soweto

Doornkop (from “Thorn Hill”) is an informal settlement near Soweto in the South West of Johannesburg. Governmentally, it is part of Greater Johannesburg, and as such, Doornkop is represented by two local “ward” councilors. Previously, it was a farm terrain. The area of Doornkop lies on one ridge, with Soweto on the opposite side. It consists of 12 “blocks,” which represent geographical and residential units. According to the Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihoods Studies (JPLS) (De Wet, Patel, Korth & Forester, 2008), Doornkop has 24,225 inhabitants. However, according to estimates that are based on an inventory of four of the 12 blocks from Child Aid Doornkop, the area of 12.76 km² could well host 13,000 families, or about 100,000 people.

Historically, the area is known for a number of battles, including the Second Boer War in 1900 between the Dutch colonists (“Boeren”) and the British colonists. During the Apartheid, it was partly farmland and partly a “township,” an area specifically designated for the Black South African people to live in. Following the start of the abolition of Apartheid in 1990, Doornkop expanded from a structured area filled with small, grey dwellings (“shacks” which gave Doornkop the nickname “Silver Town”) to a town that attracted both people from other parts of the country, and migrants from Southern Africa, such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Its attraction was claimed to be based on the abundance of free space in the area. While post-apartheid government programs, which subsidized the building of housing, led to a growth in private house ownership, the landscape’s silver lining of the “shacks” never really ceased. Local people, after all, tended to keep the shacks for renting purposes. Furthermore, unregistered South Africans and migrants have no other possibility than to live in these poorly isolated shacks. According to a 2008 study (De Wet et al., 2008) more than 40 % of the Doornkop households live in such informal housing facilities. Sometimes these shacks are living space for over five people, not unusually children have to sleep on the floor. These shacks tend to lack basic amenities, such as water, electricity and gas. On warm, windy days, the gold mine at the outskirts of Doornkop blows a fluorescent chemical dust into the area, which mixed with rain wears off the metal roofing, eventually leading to leaking roofs.

Local developmental challenges. Doornkop is ranked as the seventh most deprived area of Johannesburg (De Wet et al, 2008). There is a high prevalence of drug abuse, poverty, HIV/AIDS and TBC, and sexual abuse. Furthermore, Doornkop knows a considerable group of orphans, who often are also suffering from chronic illnesses such as tuberculosis (TBC). In addition, it is also one of the

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23 The organization Humana People to People estimates that at least 70 % of the Doornkop people suffer from more than one chronic illness, which would be fatal without the regular intake of the proper medication. Especially, the elderly sometimes forget to take in their medicine, but also people without the means to buy food, will be at risk when taking HIV-medications that burns the empty stomach.
areas with the highest rates of food insecurity, and it has the highest number of households with a person deceased that year (15%). Reportedly, a majority of the Doornkop population (62.9%) experienced mental problems (in comparison, the prevalence of mental illnesses in Diepsloot, another area of Johannesburg is 11.11%). Doornkop also has the highest rate of people with disabilities (7.1%) according to a study of eight Johannesburg neighborhoods (overall 3.7%) (De Wet et al, 2008).

**Social policy constraints.** A considerable part of the Doornkop population lives on government support. For instance, Doornkop is listed as the ward with the highest number of people receiving Child Support and Disability Grants and pensions, as compared to other areas of Johannesburg (De Wet et. al, 2008). According to a 2012 study (Patel, Hochfeld, Moodley & Mutwali, 2012), 33.5% received pensions and disability grants, while almost a quarter of the Doornkop people earn income by small business activities, such as hair salons, grocery shops and telecom shops (24.1 percent), with almost the same proportion employed in day labor (23.7 percent).

However, government grants do not reach everyone in need. Only officially registered people are entitled to receive government support. Based on extrapolating from an inventory of four of the twelve blocks performed by Child Aid Doornkop in 2012, the actual population could be estimated as being as high as four times the official number. This would mean that 75% of the 100,000 people receive no government support, not even for their children. Humana has two social workers who help unregistered people to become registered.

Not surprisingly, the harsh living conditions of the Doornkop people are closely connected to the South African history of Apartheid, leaving only a very marginal role for Black people. The Apartheid regime in South Africa, established in 1948 and abolished in 1990, refers to a system of spatial and legal racial segregation. This system aimed at the prevention of racial mixing. Apartheid laws dictated that every South African should be assigned to one of the three population characteristics: Black, White, and Colored (later on, also Indian). This racial segregation was legitimized by a Calvinistic concept of “small scale sovereignty,” but also to mask the purpose of its initiators to protect the economic and political interest of the white population. As a consequence, Black South African people were excluded from secondary education and free movement outside designated living areas. Most Black South African were assigned to low wage jobs. According to the most recent estimates (Stats SA, 2014), 80.2% of the South African population currently is Black, while 8.4% is White, but the lion’s share of the economic power is still in the hands of the White South Africans.

The post-apartheid South African government (since 1994) tries to stimulate Black Africans, but also women and other minorities to assume a more prominent economic role. With the B-BEE-policies (from Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment) for instance, enterprises employing people from "previously disadvantaged communities" (PDC), can receive a B-BEE-score. According to the level of effort employers invest in skills development and HRM of staff, ownership, management and representation of people from PDC’s, this score can favor assignments from the government. However, the social policies of the South African government are not always effective as a result of cultural constraints (De Wet, 2012). For example, many local people tend to confine their lives to the area where they were born, and welfare dependency prevents them from taking initiative to become financially self-sufficient. Furthermore, according to De Wet (2012) social policies aiming at mobilizing Black South Africans result in a sort of “volunteerism”: local people are engaged to work in basic social and family care functions, providing them with a stipend and other benefits, such as housing.

In addition to socio-economic policies, a second incentive to advance economic participation by PDC’s is the South African educational policy. Young children are encouraged to go to school (for instance by providing free school meals), but many households in Doornkop cannot afford the daily fee for the taxi and the school uniforms. As a result, during daytime young children and adolescents
can be seen hanging out on the street. The system of Child Support Grants do, however, seem to positively contribute to the mothers’ involvement with the future of their children (see Patel, Knijn & van Wel, 2014).

**Features of local governance and civil society.** At the time of the field study, it was election-period for the Presidency and Parliament, and that coincided with a heightened interest of the South African government in local community life. Officers of the Department of Social Development were sent out to visit local communities to make inventories of the local needs and wishes of the South African people. After their visit to Doornkop, the civil servants were astonished by both the lack of public services, as well as the flexibility, resilience, and survival skills of the local population. Doornkop has only a few day care centers, of which three have been able to receive an official status that gives access to public funding. Besides a few block-based initiatives for the elderly and childcare, it seemed like most of the community services were in the hands of Humana People to People. Civil society life outside of the Humana center also seemed scarce.

### 7.2. Child Aid Doornkop, volunteerism as stepping stone to social development

Child Aid Doornkop (CAD) is a local development organization that has its entrance gate on the road to Dobsonville, one of the main roads. A key is required to open the gate, and once inside the center, the gate has to be closed and locked again. Usually, a guard is present. The area is not safe. During the field study, the computer room had been burglarized. Outside, near one of the corners of the center, men hang out either looking for a day job, smoking nyope (one of the drug plagues of Doornkop), or playing some game. According to some of the staff, many of the men “are up to no good.”

Roland Ngoh, the manager of CAD invited me to present myself to the staff during the daily assembly. It was on a Monday morning, 8.30 AM. Under sunny sky, about 40 men and women, mostly in nurses’ uniforms, gathered at the square next to the head offices. When Roland arrived, staff started singing religious songs. When the voices deemed, one man took the center of the square and preached about the significance of the uniform they are wearing during their work. It connects them with Christ, he said.

Looking around the center (or “The Project” in local lingo), the contrast with Amsterdam and Chelsea became apparent: here, a considerable part of the activity is in the open air. Staff was waiting for visitors, either in the sun or in the shadows. A few days, later food parcels were displayed on the center field to be picked up by the poor. After their afternoon nap, the children from the preschool were playing in the garden. Nearby, two impressive constructions marked the community garden experiment. This project, funded with 5.000.000 ZAR by Pretoria Portland Cement, is set up for permaculture research into the different types of vegetables, so that home gardening can be productive the whole year round. Once determined, the corresponding seeds, as well as the necessary skills training, is provided for the community.

Further, the center has five buildings: the main building with the general staff offices and a large meeting room; the second one, housing the HIV-AIDS counseling and an atelier with sewing machines; a third building including a large room with PC’s and a staff room for social and family workers. The fourth building houses the preschool. At the entrance, is a shack where the home-based care staff assembles,signifying the roots of CAD. In that dwelling, it all started in 1995.
A comprehensive approach to local development

Humana People to People, the official name of the mother organization of Child Aid Doornkop, opened the center in Doornkop in 1995. CAD was the initiative of Humana, a Switzerland-based international development NGO that originally funded most of its activities by the selling of second hand clothing. Since its start, the center in Doornkop has grown out into a large organization, staffing in 2014 over 120 people, of which most are working as volunteers in home-based care, family support and AIDS/HIV-counseling. Most of the volunteers receive a monthly stipend of ZAR 1250 from the Department of Social Development. There are also nine program leaders, each responsible for a specific target area, and each with varying remunerations. These target areas range from preschool activities, HIV-AIDS counseling, home-based care (HBC), health and hygiene promotion, support of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), skills development, children and youth, environment and agriculture, and community development. They meet in a weekly project leaders meeting to discuss, explore and plan activities inside and outside the community center. Twelve functionaries work as “area leaders,” community workers who are each responsible for one of the twelve blocks of Doornkop. These area leaders are the main focus of the field research (I will elaborate on that topic later in more detail).

Humana can be described as a broad and comprehensive community-development initiative. Although most of the staff has its primary work in HBC, OVC and HIV/AIDS-care (and derive their stipend from this work), the general strategy of the community center is to design and implement a broad social development strategy in Doornkop. CAD works here with a mix of government and private funding. Most of its government funds come from the Department of Social Development, for instance, to support crime prevention, teen pregnancies and the battle against AIDS and other transferable diseases. Private funds, such as Johnson and Johnson and Microsoft, sponsor materials like computers and software.

Before going into more depth with regard to the tasks and activities of the local community organizers in the next paragraphs, a few rough sketches of the width and range of the CAD are presented. At the time of the field research, the organization worked with 10 program principles, ranging from more general approaches, such as development, health, environment and education, to more specific ones, such as home-based care and HIV/AIDS counseling. Table 7.1 below lists the ten program principles of CAD.

Men’s support group. During the research in Doornkop, there was a focus on a number of then current issues. First of all, was the development of a men’s support group. Research, mentioned previously (Mavungu Eddy et al., 2013) sketched the vulnerability of the Black father in South African family life. Furthermore provides scientific evidence increasing evidence for the link between poverty, aggression, gender roles, alcohol, drug abuse and child rape (Banwari, 2011). The study into the position of the Black South African fathers stipulated the importance of male education about the role of men in the family and in society. Since I am a psychologist and also a father, the social workers of CAD thought I could contribute well to the development and coaching of such a support group. I agreed to do so, as it gave me an extra opportunity to participate in the daily practices of CAD staff. The goal of the men’s support group was to stimulate the exchange and sharing of experiences of fathers, and to stimulate awareness about strategies to deal with the challenges in their lives. The weekly meetings experienced a slow start, partly due to difficulties committing local men to come
and participate, the cultural threshold (“machismo”) to talk about their problems, and the fact that many men need to be on the road to find day labor.

**Gardening.** Within CAD, area leaders and program managers gave much weight to the promotion of gardening by local residents. The development of gardens is generally considered to serve multiple purposes: health, economic, environmental, and psychological. As mentioned before, CAD itself has a large “model garden” on its premises, and conducts gardening experiments with different types of spinach and tomatoes. CAD distributes the seeds for free among the population, and sells the vegetables they grow themselves at affordable prices. By promoting local gardening, CAD hopes to stimulate people to enrich their daily diet of pap with vegetables. Moreover, with their own vegetable garden, they can also extend their means of existence, because it is an almost cost-free way to get food on the table. Some of the local people even turn their gardening into a small business: they sell the vegetables they have grown at the local market; others specialize in the cultivation of seedlings for trees, which they can sell to the Department of City Parks in Johannesburg. Growing vegetables around the house is also said to contribute to physical safety, as it keeps snakes away. Finally, gardening stimulates a number of social and psychological processes in the local community: it mobilizes environmental awareness among local people and creates a sense of ownership of their own surroundings. Area leaders are aware of the advantages of gardening, and promote it during weekly meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM PRINCIPLE</th>
<th>SHORT EXPLANATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY OF THE FAMILIES</td>
<td>Skills development, educational activities, local economic initiatives and micro credit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. HEALTH PROMOTION</td>
<td>Awareness raising and education of local people about HIV/AIDS, life skills and basic health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRESCHOOLS OF THE FUTURE</td>
<td>CAD preschool functioning as a model for local preschools; training and education for future preschool staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CHILDREN ACTIVE IN THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERE</td>
<td>Activities to activate the children in Doornkop, for instance by sports and education in the Youth Clubs Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTS</td>
<td>Children of the Future Program, Child Care Support: coaching and education of orphans and vulnerable children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. EDUCATION</td>
<td>Organizing debates in schools and training volunteers in HIV/AIDS, environment, crime, drugs, abuse, life skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Cooperation with councillors, and other parties to address local development challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>Raising awareness about the environment, and planting trees, cleaning, and developing community gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING</td>
<td>Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centre, for testing, guidance and education on sexually transmitted diseases. Relieving stigma on HIV/AIDS in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. HOME BASED CARE</td>
<td>Home-based care to terminally ill and bedridden people by volunteers trained as caregivers.</td>
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*Table 7.1: Overview of the ten program principles of Child Aid Doornkop.*
Activating people of the blocks. During the time of the field research, it was election period in South Africa. The election campaigns were not only dominated by corruption scandals around the ruling ANC government, such as the expensive reconstruction of SA President Zuma’s estate, but opposition parties also challenged the current ANC government for its inability to combat the poverty of the Black population. This led to a heightened momentary interest by the Department of Social Development in issues of local community development, the quality of physical and social infrastructure, and consequently, Doornkop also was visited by a delegation of civil servants to assess the local quality of community life. The area leaders of CAD had put great effort into activating people of the blocks under their guidance to visit the hearing one afternoon, leading to a firm acknowledgement by the visiting government delegates that Doornkop lacks a great deal of basic facilities. At the same time, they praised the resilience of the local Doornkop people and the CAD-staff’s ability to mobilize the different blocks for the afternoon session.

7.3. The professional tasks of the Doornkop area leaders

In the field research, the focus was on what area leaders and other community workers considered as the constituents of their professional mandate, and how they reported handling challenges to that professional mandate. That mandate, or their sense of having professional legitimacy for their work with the community, is closely connected to their role and position in the local community. Community development in South Africa can best be labeled as a form of social development (Patel, 2012), combining a focus on social wellbeing with economic development. In order to describe how community development efforts within CAD are taking shape, it is important to acknowledge the distinction between community development as the general strategy of CAD - the translation of that strategy into programs (program principles), and the application of the programs in daily practices. In order to describe the professional tasks in daily community development practice, the focus is on the daily tasks of the area leaders in relation to the local community. In general, the people working directly with the communities take on roles such as, (1) mobilizer, (2) educator, (3) connector, (4) spokesperson and (5) facilitator. They engage in tasks such as mobilization, education, linking the community and the system, representation, and development of empowerment capacities.

Mobilizing the community. Area leaders have one or more blocks under their supervision. These blocks, as mentioned earlier, are geographical units. When important events are upcoming, such as youth camps, elections, or meetings with people from outside the community, the area leaders go into the blocks to talk with people and stimulate them to visit CAD. For instance, when civil servants from the Department of Social Development visited Doornkop, the area leaders went out recruiting people from their blocks.

Educating the community. Area leaders regularly receive information, training and knowledge with regard to public health, environment, safety and economic concerns. Their task is to bring that knowledge into the community during their weekly block meetings. These block meetings are the core of the functioning of the so called “Block Action Groups,” which are made up of organized active block residents.

Connecting the community. A third task is to connect the different block residents, and look for possibilities to bring people from different blocks together. Block-based activities include organizing
weekly meetings, where neighborhood people can discuss their concerns, engage in block-based enterprises, and make products for the local market (clothes and other textiles, Vaseline, candles). Area leaders also stimulate local people to participate in “common action,” voluntary activities to improve, for instance, the local neighborhood garden of the local preschool. “Linking” people from the different blocks happens when the different block action groups sell their products at the monthly community market at CAD. Finally, linking activities include inviting block members to the CAD for registration as an inhabitant of Doornkop, if they are in need of food support or child support grants. At CAD, two social work professionals are assigned for this registration of people-in-need.

**Representing the community.** Area leaders also informally represent the people from the blocks under their supervision. It was not uncommon that area leaders voiced the concerns of the block people during staff meetings. They signal urgencies, but sometimes also negotiate in conflicts between residents. Area leaders, such as most of the CAD staff, consider themselves as the “primus inter pares” of the Doornkop community. Based on their education in domains such as home based care, HIV/AIDS counseling, or family support, they have been able to develop themselves and acquire a position as informal local leader.

**Empowering the community.** Most of the area leaders, however, see it as their primary role to empower the local people. These community workers consider themselves as exemplifying what one can become in life. They try to convince people to free themselves from welfare dependency, and invest in the development of skills they can use to develop themselves on the labor market. Area leaders are the “eyes and ears” for the living conditions of families. Also, they supervise the development of local gardens. The ten CAD program principles, outlined previously, are guiding to evaluate that process of empowerment in the different blocks.

### 7.4. The contextual constituents of the Doornkop area leaders’ professional legitimacy

In order to realize the comprehensive development agenda of CAD, area leaders have to create professional legitimacy for their involvement with the block residents. According to legitimacy theory, passive as well as active support has to be mobilized. Also, area leaders would have to establish continuity, so that their engagement, and the engagement of the residents, can develop over time into sustainable and tangible results. At the same time, the area leaders should also be concerned about their credibility. The question is, however, how will the area leaders formulate their professional mandate, drawing on their experiences in the blocks?

#### 7.4.1. Acquisition as an expression of passive support

One of the crucial elements of an area leader’s professional mandate is the acquisition of the residents’ engagement. It is essential that area leaders are able to convince block residents to become active. The gathering of this initial willingness to become engaged gives a provisional form of support for the area leaders’ activities.

But this engagement does not emerge on its own accord. For instance, convincing residents to leave their houses and to walk to the community center to talk to the ward councillor about their concerns, requires patience, as well as a lot of discussion about what the function of such a meeting is. Similarly, activating the local men to join the CAD’s Men’s Support Group is a matter of continuous
acquisition efforts: weekly visits to the blocks, asking home-based caregivers to look out for possible members. Furthermore, convincing local community members to become active in the Block Action Committees does not always bare immediate success. Acquisition requires patience, diligence, and strategic sensitivity.

Area leaders also will have to check the level of awareness in the blocks about the opportunities to become active. According to some of the area leaders, at least a certain sensibility is required to consider alternative life strategies. For instance, there is a story to be told about what it means to exchange a life of welfare dependency for a life based on self-sufficiency.

The creation of willingness to become engaged also has to account for the burdens of many of the local residents: chronic illnesses, responsibility for an extended family, being orphaned; facing the challenges of poverty already consume a lot mental energy. Also, there still is some residue of the Apartheid consciousness visible in the tendency of local people to become “locked” in their blocks, and stay dependent on the charity of local and government benefactors.

Rose, one of the senior area leaders, explains how she faces that possible lack of energy, and considers it at the same time as an opportunity for acquisition:

“We mustn’t sit down and say, ‘I’ve got nothing, I am not ... I am unemployed.’ So, you cannot change things if you don’t meet with other people. So we move around in the Area. And mobilize them and send them to the meeting point where we meet.”

The area leaders engage in awareness raising activities almost on a daily basis. For them, as community workers, it is a fight against what they see as “ignorance” which is a term regularly used by CAD staff to denote a lack of knowledge about the basic facts of life. As June, one of the area leaders, explains, “If you sit at home, you will never know what is happening outside.” For Maria, the social auxiliary and one of the initiators of the Men’s Support Group, talking and sharing experiences is a great way to tackle this ignorance:

“Most of the time the men are faced with a lot of problems. And then they’re not speaking out their problems. So that’s why we started: to see that it’s good to have a Support Group for men. Because they got problems, but they don’t speak out. But they have problems. So [we] started to talk with them that they are feeling free to speak about everything that they hate in their different families.”

But awareness is just one aspect of acquisition. Fighting ignorance is like a one-way street of interaction. According to the area leaders, it requires the acquisition of initial support, also a form of mutuality. This mutuality is a two-way form of interaction, among others visible in the self-help model, which supports many of the Humana development projects. Self-help is a classic community developmental strategy. It rests on the bonding strength of “shared experiences.” The exploration of their experiences, tends to lead to the discovery of commonalities. This creates a sense of community. That is the seed for people to start sharing efforts at the block level. Therefore, June says that the topics of discussion and activities have to be derived from what the residents collectively consider as relevant:

“Some things that keep them busy (...). [S]ometimes we (...) involve them in our topic, like what we can do, like a small workshop ... We can do a small workshop with them ... They must bring a topic and stick on it.”

But finding a common topic is just one way to explore mutual interests. For Rose, mutuality also has to become visible in an intent to become part of a shared effort:
“I think sometimes it was not easy to put somebody down and say, ’Yeah, you know what, I know you were unable to do things for yourself, but now let’s work together as a team. I am going to be part of this. Let’s try it and do it. So that we can focus on this and see if we can manage to do this for ourselves.’”

In this reflection, Rose makes an allusion to mutuality as a source of energy. It refers to the potential powerfulness of collective action, or “doing things together,” as area leaders regularly referred to it. It expressed what they were looking for in the community. This togetherness holds a promise to become engaged; after all, block development is, or must be, a project of mutual interest. As a result, a more robust further engagement of the community could emerge, for instance, in the weekly Block Action Groups. This engagement creates legitimacy for the area leaders’ efforts to increase the number of involved block residents.

A third essential aspect of acquisition, is managing the expectations of the block residents. In their initial contacts, area leaders regularly have to correct the expectations local people have about what the area leaders are able to offer. Sometimes, community members hope that these workers bring jobs, or even come up with money. These expectations even lead to community members treating them as saviors, as bringers of hope. Destiny once remarked, “When they see us (…) they see a teacher, a mother, [an] angel. You see?” It is crucial that expectations are corrected. The intentions of the area leaders must be clear from the beginning. There is some tension here, as these expectations in the blocks at least bear a promise of engagement. This contrasts with the more challenging situations of disengagement and apathy that area leaders regularly have to overcome. After all, area leaders mention resistance as a major challenge. In a sense, it mirrors the concept of awareness, mentioned earlier in this section. Due to the precarious circumstances people live in, public life is hazardous in Doornkop. Regularly, people are just ill and immobile. A heavy rain shower can lead to leaking roofs, and this can be just enough to prevent people from joining the weekly meeting. Moreover, the dependence of the local residents on day labor or “piece work” makes their engagement unpredictable. As a result, the cooperation of the people that area leaders can count on to give block-based activities a broad base is fragile. During a discussion between three area leaders, one of them confessed the disappointment she had during a group meeting. She had put great effort into mobilizing the residents, but as it turned out:

“[a]t the end of the day only few people attend. (…) I started asking myself … Out of that maybe 200 people that I have reached - only 60 or 70, something, then they don’t attend in numbers.”

This quote reflects the concern of many area leaders regarding their ability to acquire willingness among the local residents to become active in their blocks. For instance, there are concerns that turn up during common actions in the neighborhood. The community workers of CAD sometimes see an initial, provisional mandate to work with the local residents run ashore as a result of “ignorance,” or by the sense of hopelessness founded in the regularly desperate life circumstances of the residents. But when they are able to acquire the attention of their constituents - possibly even mobilize them to visit a community meeting, a foundation for further engagement might be established. As local people seem to “appropriate” their own development, area leaders experience a new basis for their professional mandate. An active involvement appears, signaling an emerging sense of ownership along the lines of the developmental mission of CAD.
7.4.2. Appropriation as an expression of active support

When area leaders reflect on how they recognize active support for their engagement with the block residents, they allude to a deepening interest of the community in its own development. In more abstract terms, active support is manifested as block members appropriate a specific type of community engagement. Appropriation has connotations of ownership, but also of moral justness. This combination of ownership in a specific manner is what area leaders are hoping to establish. After all, when local residents appropriate their own development, the intentionional balance shifts in a specific way. It shifts from the acquisition efforts of the area leaders (passive support) to the willingness of the local people to change things in and around their lives, based on the principles of economic self-reliance (active support). Martha, one of the coordinators of CAD, illustrates this form of appropriation by recalling how a woman recently had come to the center:

“Like last week there was a woman who came here and asked, ‘I am sitting at home, I don’t know what I can do. So maybe, can I be part of your volunteers? Or maybe (...) in the garden?’ I said to her, ‘In the blocks ... in the areas, we are having Area Leaders, and they have Block Action Groups. (…) ... the Area Leader: I will talk to him and then he or she will meet you in the area. And then you discuss. And then you can join that group.’”

Area leaders are keen to such signals of appropriation. It exemplifies, after all, legitimacy for the developmental strategy of Child Aid Doornkop, but it also legitimizes their individual professional efforts. According to the area leaders, the question is, “What are signals for this intentional shift?”

One signal that area leaders are sensitive to is emerging ownership, which represents a mental state. It occurs as a switch in ideas and behavior. Rose recalls one of those moments of ownership, when a group of block residents convened to discuss ways to keep chickens to supplement their diet with eggs:

“[T]his is what I mean. So in my Area we have encountered that one. But [they] sit down and say, ‘No, let’s not rely on the Project. We need to do things for ourselves.’ So I didn’t negotiate that. I didn’t come out with a plan. They themselves, they communicated, they come with a plan: let’s contribute from our pocket and buy the meat. And then we start a small thing, then it will grow. We can buy things. (...) So they end up getting others we want these, and then get the money, continue ... yeah ...”

Also June, who is very explicit in the claim of her position (“You must lead them, not come with discussions”), observed instances of emerging ownership when the women she works with started to explore which products to make for the monthly community market: “They discuss what they’re going to do. (...) If they want to do shoes, okay. Do cushions. Do caps, you know.”

A second aspect, which area leaders detect in this process of appropriation can be labeled as expansion. Expansion can refer to a growth of the group size, additional knowledge, or increased skills of the active people. Expansion seems to emerge as a sort of auto poiesis: the group of active people shows signs of self-engagement. They start to invite other residents, engaging them in a seemingly spontaneous manner in learning new techniques for gardening or making clothes. Some of the area leaders also associate that expansion with the mission of CAD: to be an umbrella organization for a great number of community initiatives which will expand the pace of the community and the direction it wants to go.

Area leaders have countless anecdotes of this spontaneous expansion. For instance, this expansion in size, as well as in skills, becomes visible when people who participated in sewing lessons,
used that knowledge to teach the techniques to other block members. Another example is when area leaders hear that people start borrowing gardening tools from each other.

For area leaders, these processes of appropriation of the developmental philosophy of CAD, are not unproblematic. Their actions can impact positively or negatively. For local people to take responsibility to change the way they approach their life's challenges, it might be necessary to take a step back and have trust in them. At the same time, this appropriation has its challenges, such as when people expect too much result too soon. For instance, residents can be disappointed when there are not enough people attending the weekly meetings, or when the profits are not as high as expected. Still, as tempting as it might be, area leaders see it as paramount to keep acknowledging the responsibility of the people. June sometimes faces stubborn people in her block; and despite her urge to want to intervene, she holds back, because:

“If you told someone, guys do this and this and this, and they do agree. At the end of the day they don’t do it. (...) I mean, this person is not a child.”

Also Maria, the social auxiliary leading the Men’s Support Group stipulates the responsibility of the participants. While she witnesses that men can be angry or impatient about what happens around them, she tries to:

“Communicate with them, try to show them the right thing, try to advise them. Because you know, I cannot change you. You are the one who’s supposed to change yourself.”

When local residents assume responsibility for their life's challenges, area leaders need to prepare in order to adopt the developmental philosophy as expressed in the ten Guidelines of CAD. After all, that is the framework for their activities with the block residents. But despite the emphasis that area leaders put on residents taking responsibility, they simultaneously tend to insert a more supportive touch. They assist, and even encourage the efforts of the local community members to grow, even when things do not always proceed as planned. No matter how important they feel a duty for their own cause, area leaders are also sensitive to the fact that many of the Doornkop residents carry heavy burdens in their lives. So the caring touch is essential. They are concerned about what is on the minds of the residents. They try to be alert for personal family issues, or eventually, financial or other types of support that is needed. For instance, Rose even recognizes that the people who are learning to cook as part of their training to become a caterer can have their setbacks:

“Yes, we need to monitor those groups and see how they are doing. The challenges they encounter (...) they struggle to buy the meat. So they struggle to buy the meat when they need to make some meals.”

In sum, as an amplified form of support for their work in the blocks, appropriation expresses a turn in engagement, a new center of gravity for their professional involvement. Local residents start to show initiative, taking ownership in activities such as in community gardening or in producing articles for the local monthly market. But area leaders also observe appropriation when local initiatives grow in size, or when they expand their knowledge and skills. Acknowledging the residents' responsibility is essential. But by also expressing care and being encouraging,

the CAD community workers recognize and appreciate the struggles of those residents in appropriating their own development path.

A necessary condition, central in the following section, is that area leaders are able to create continuity in that development.
7.4.3. Coherence as an expression of continuity

Listening to the reflections of the Doornkop area leaders about what is essential for the continuity of their professional involvement, one dominant feature becomes visible: the necessity of coherence. This coherence refers to their own interactions with the residents, the interactions between the residents, as well as the way residents deal with life’s challenges.

A first question is what enables the area leaders to professionally become and stay engaged with the block members. First of all, circumstances have to be in their favor. Coherence in the daily lives of their constituency matters considerably. The community workers of CAD try to create predictability in the community lives. As mentioned earlier, the living conditions of the Doornkop people are precarious, and as a consequence, a persistent engagement is not possible. CAD staff regularly have to go to great lengths to mobilize people for community meetings, and the turnout is not always satisfying. For instance, when civil servants visited the center to hold a hearing on the local social infrastructure, many of the staff were anxious about the number of people who would attend the session. People could retract because they had become ill, or were on their way to day labor. The workers also regularly used the word “bed ridden” to explain why someone did not show up. The difficulty of gathering enough people simultaneously at a specific time and place was even hazardous to having a widely attended meeting. More than once, people visiting the CAD-center and waiting for a meeting to start, later found out that it was eventually cancelled due to a lack of enough participants.

Within these precarious situations, patience is essential. Area leaders are sensitive to signs of a continuous commitment by residents. So, the following came forward in a conversation between two area leaders:

Area leader 1: “Others, they sit and wait, others ... they will not ...”

Area leader 2: “They will go.”

Area leader 1: “But those who waited ... those who waited, they continue. Then they join... those were (...) successful.”

Some of the workers see in people willing to wait, commitment, passion or enthusiasm. This signifies a deeper, more emotional attachment to the development of their block, one that is, according to Elisa, crucial:

“Yeah, Child Aid is just [here to learn, jag] them on how to take projects (...) to their area. So, they have to stand by themselves, do things on their own. (...) How to apply for a sponsor. How to look for a sponsor. It must be in their mind. They must work hard in doing things for themselves.”

Elisa’s comment on the importance of committed block members must, however, be complemented by committed area leaders. Continuity of their professional involvement depends on a firm engagement with the local community members. Rose’s reflection illustrates this commitment:

“Yeah, it’s because I am always there with the community members. If you want to lead people, you must always be part of them. (...) I cannot say, ‘Let’s come together and be in this initiative and this and this,’ and then don’t show up. I must also be part of that meeting.”

A second aspect, which area leaders associate with persistent engagement has to do with the way they discuss time as part of the development process. This could refer to the timeframe required to increase the revenues of the Block Action Groups, or to the fact that the growth of profits of a lo-
cal business needs time. One of the area leaders remembered what she once said to a group of women:

“That thing you are planning. It doesn’t happen now. It will take some time. ‘Please guys, let’s be patient.’”

Another association with the time as part of the development of a mandate, is offered by Maria. In her work with men, she meets anger and resistance. To resolve those feelings, time is crucial, she says:

“The anger is there. So too ... I think I must try to take out that anger they have (...). And make them see what they [are] ... supposed to do. But they cannot change today. It will take long. But (...) I’m always with them, and showing them the right thing, they will change. (...) I must make them (...) understand.”

In other words, the continuity of her engagement rests on the time she takes to engage with the men to offer an interpretation of their experiences of anger. This does not happen overnight. It requires more than one meeting.

Coherence refers not only to time, but also to place. After all, area leaders supervise the development of geographically delineated spaces: the blocks. Activities, such as the weekly block meetings also have to happen somewhere; so too does making profits and gathering knowledge. Additionally, people have to go somewhere. That place can be someone’s house, an open space (to create a garden), or the CAD-center. It is a recurring theme: “Where do we organize things, and where do the profits go?” But more profound than the mere location of the activities, is the concern of area leaders about the spatial relationship between the center of CAD and the blocks. This relationship seems essential for the persistence of their involvement with the block residents. For instance, the sewing lessons at the CAD-center are not only for personal gain, but also have to be of use for the women in the blocks. So, the skills they acquire have to be transferred —taught— to the other block members, and this can be put into practice during the weekly block meetings. Similarly, the preschool in the CAD center is a local “incubator” — training staff for future preschools in other areas of Doornkop. In the same manner, the profits that the Block Action Groups have made during the monthly market at the CAD center are used for the benefits of the block. As a central location, CAD thus functions as a mental developmental mechanism for the blocks.

Rose, for instance, clarifies this:

“So the things that we are doing - and then they sell them (...) But the money they actually make ... they put half of the money to the Block Area. And then another [half is] for themselves, so that they can [buy new material].

Elisa also emphasizes the role of the block as a center of development:

“So, Child Aid is just an umbrella. (...) So, if they need assistance they can get assistance, but they must do things for themselves. (...) They must take Child Aid into their areas, so that they can work for themselves.”

So far, the continuity of the professional involvement of the CAD community workers has been linked to their ability to create coherence in the local residents’ life circumstances, at the pace of de-
velopment, and in the locality of activities. A last, but essential aspect of coherence, emerging from the reflection of the area leaders, concerns the relevance of the residents’ activities. Activities need to be practical, as well as challenging and exciting at the same time. In the Block Action Groups, for instance, local residents make products that can be used or sold immediately. Mayonnaise, candles, carpets, Vaseline, hats, or school uniforms, all are common items in Doornkop’s households. At the CAD center, they can sell their products during the monthly community market. Rose, who in 2012 was one of the initiators of the Skills Development and Income Generating Program, recalls how she addressed the community members in those days:

“It’s after we have mobilized them. Yeah, they ... they came in numbers. It was in ... 2012. Yeah, 2012. We had some community members who were taking part, or who were there in the meetings, who continued doing their income generating projects. (...) We (...) explained to them, that they need to stand by themselves and start their homestead gardens. [...] It is going to offer them the means so that they can (...) fight poverty. [...] If they plant those vegetables, they can sell. And then that income is going to their pockets, so that they can buy [new material, jg]. So that they cannot say, ‘I am unemployed and I cannot do it.’”

Regarding what holds practical relevance for the residents, the area leaders favor a variety of, mostly complementary, views. Some point to the transactional value of their efforts: if they produce household items, such as candles or mayonnaise, they can sell them or use them for their own benefit. Another type of relevance is developmental. Rose refers to this at the end of the last quote: “So they cannot say, I am unemployed.” What they do, gives a positive impulse to economic empowerment.

Most of the time, however, the area leaders create persistence in their professional involvement with the residents by mixing practical with developmental relevance. Producing a bag, or planting spinach, is useful, but it is also a step further away from dependency or poverty. So, this contributes coherence to the longer term developmental agenda of CAD, while the practical relevance for the residents also provides professional legitimacy to the area leaders. However, whether or not the local people acknowledge this relevance, is a matter of the credibility of the area leader. The next and last section on the constituents of professional legitimacy in Doornkop, explores what area leaders consider as crucial for their credibility.

7.4.4. Authority as an expression of credibility

It is not difficult to imagine that the area leaders need to be seen as credible in order to be able to do their work properly. It is essential that when they invite block residents for an event, people can rely on their word that the event will indeed take place. Moreover, as area leaders regularly reach out to educate the local residents on for instance, HIV/AIDS, family issues, safety, or environmental themes, their expertise has to be found beyond suspicion. Besides, community members sometimes confide personal information to them, so their discretion has to be trusted.

In line with the above, one particular concern seems to dominate. That is a concern for authority. The area leaders have to be more than just one of the block members; they also have to represent what the community is capable of.

This point can be demonstrated by showing the range of meanings area leaders attach to authority. June, for instance, only very recently appointed as an area leader, considers her authority as fragile, especially compared to that of a ward councilor, who has a political mandate. For instance,
she acknowledges that she is limited in addressing the local youth on their drug abuse and criminal behavior, even though the community suffers from it:

“[I] think like ... the counselors and [...] those who are in charge on a higher level (...) they’re the ones who are supposed to come and talk to those young people who are doing these things. (...) ‘Cause if I will come and talk to them, they won’t listen. There are those who are listening, but when I turn my back, they will say, ‘Ah, who does she think she is?’ (...) you know.”

On the other hand, some area leaders feel people are bestowing them with a special authority. Destiny, for instance, recalls how people come to her, asking:

“Can you please help us to do this?” And I was like, ‘Why me?’ And they said, ‘Because you are the person with whom we think we can get through to the government.’

One of the first requirements for authority that area leaders mention is veracity. An area leader has to be taken at face value. This form of transparency must become visible so that people know what they can and can’t expect from the area leaders. This “managing expectations” is not an easy task. The basis for many block activities is fragile, due to the unpredictable life circumstances in Doornkop. At the same time, people’s existing views about the possibilities to change the outlook on their lives needs to be challenged, for instance by setting new goals, by looking into the future, by exploring dreams. Area leaders sometimes become aware of the important role that they start to play in people’s lives, realizing also that their presence is not permanent. During a discussion with three area leaders, one of them remembered how she announced during a meeting with block residents:

“You know guys; you must know that things don’t remain the same. Things do change. It might happen in the future, I might not be able to work with you. And then you will be maybe working with other people.”

Authority as an area leader not only demands that they are able to manage the expectations of the block residents. They also have to be aware of their position in the community. Their professional base at CAD, and their involvement with the block residents, puts them in a special position, as “one of the locals, but one with a special duty.” It makes them a primus inter pares, a role model, so to speak. So their mandate is not based on formal power, but rather on their ability to be that role model and to live by example. That is at least what most of the area leaders feel is their duty. This duty is notable, as the community regularly confirms their special position. According to Destiny:

“[O]thers say I am a ... I am an example to them. (...) They do say that. They come to me and tell me that I am an example for them. ‘We can learn something from you.’”

During several conversations with area leaders and also with program managers at the CAD Centre, the notion that they exemplify the positive and the potential in the community was abundantly present. According to some of the area leaders, they indeed are a role model, and they owe this position to CAD; the organization has provided them the opportunity to develop themselves. I It has given them a chance to acquire, for instance, education, so that they can work in home-based care, in preschool work, or in nursing. Other area leaders who got a degree through formal schooling, such as Rose (management), Maria (Social Work), or Ashley (Business Administration), still consider it as their duty to show the community in Doornkop what a local person can achieve.

However, they emphasize that being a role model has to be displayed in the community. It has to be lived, and more specifically, lived among the local residents. It is a widely accepted notion in
South Africa that role models work as social leverage to increase the broader participation of Black South Africans. It is part of the CAD strategy, and it is rooted in South Africa’s social development paradigm. Area leaders acknowledge that their presence in the blocks is essential. It roots their authority. Not only by being there, at the locality, but also when they are doing an outreach, they show that they are aware of that. During my field research, I witnessed several occasions where area leaders left the center in the morning to mobilize block residents. This was the case when a children’s camp was organized in March. But it also was evident on the morning when government officials visited the center to hear from the local residents about what measures could improve their lives. It typically is true whenever there are common actions planned, such as constructing a community garden or cleaning up an area.

A third aspect that area leaders associate with authority is effectiveness. This notion relates to the emphasis area leaders, as well as care givers and program managers, give to the fact that actions must lead to progress. This urge to be effective in one’s activities, became visible, for instance, in the discussions about the expansion of participation in the Men’s Support Group. Furthermore, area leaders report they are keen to also see the Block Action Groups under their supervision grow in size and in impact. During field visits, area leaders such as June, Joan and Elisa were busy inquiring and checking to determine who did and did not show up at the weekly meeting, and why a resident was absent. Especially, they displayed interest in the reason for someone’s absence. Was it because of an illness, or because someone had to find work for that day? Furthermore, area leaders were alert to inspect whether anything, and if so, what was being produced during the Block Action Group meetings. They checked whether the participants contributed to the Block Action Group fund (a form of small business development fund). Similarly, they would inquire about the ingredients that had to be bought to make products for the monthly community market in the CAD Center. Whether or not there was a sense of competition between the area leaders, was not clear. However, during the preparation for one of those community markets, June took the researcher apart to visit one of the women in her block. She appeared very skilled in making local arts and crafts, and her mere presence in the block, made June visibly proud. She clearly considered the woman to be an asset for her ambition to the further development of the block.

Another, not insignificant, association among area leaders with credibility is trust. With the history of apartheid in mind, confidence in public and private services in South Africa is not obvious. If there is trust, it may be fragile, and a mistake by a staff member can damage the shaky trust immediately. Also Doornkop people are often hesitant (“shy”) to become engaged. However, trust is essential to change things. It is in itself a mobilizing force, noted Rose. When she announced a long time ago that she was to become an area leader at another block, one of her children remarked:

“Ah, the day you pass away, I don’t want to see it. Because we need to [have] a big event, because there will be more people wanted to be there for you (…). When we move around with you (…) we hear Mama G, Mama G (Rose’s nickname, jg). When they enter the gate, the first person they thought about is Mama G.”

The following anecdote by Destiny provides a final example of the mobilizing power of trust. She speaks about the recent scourge of child rape in her block. When she discusses this subject with the residents, she notices that they are quite prepared to be vigilant. People have to have trust that something can change for the better. Therefore, she has to show them what to do, for instance by talking to older boys, if they are in the company of young children. That way she inspires:

“I achieve something because (…) [w]hen I talk, they do the right thing. I think it’s because they trust me.”
In sum, authority is a crucial aspect of the area leaders’ legitimacy to work with the community in the blocks. This authority is associated with their special position as one of the local residents, but with a special purpose. Area leaders consider themselves to be exemplifying what the community is capable of achieving. This authority leans on their informal position as a role model, of being a primus inter pares. This implies being present in the blocks on a regular basis, achieving tangible progress in the betterment of the daily life of residents, and the ability of earning and keeping trust.

7.4.5. Summarizing the contextual constituents of professional legitimacy of Doornkop’s area leaders

In the previous sections, the constituents of professional legitimacy have been explored, as seen by the Doornkop area leaders. This yielded the following aspects: (1) Acquisition of the willingness among the block residents to become engaged; (2) Appropriation of the development process by the block residents; (3) Coherence: alignment of the interests, the locality, and the time frame of the engagement of the community to facilitate continuity of their professional engagement; and (4) Authority, as an asset, based on their role as primus inter pares. These constituents of professional legitimacy have been further explored by examining the associations of the area leaders with these constituents. The table below summarizes these associations. In the following sections, the strategies and resources organizers account for to create, sustain and restore these constituents will be outlined.

Fig 7.1. Overview of the contextual constituents of professional legitimacy of the Doornkop area leaders
7.5. The operational dimension: Managing professional legitimacy in Doornkop

So far, the conditions that enable the Doornkop area leaders to be and stay engaged with the block residents have been identified. These conditions or constituents, make it possible for them to engage in the development of the different blocks of Doornkop along the ten guidelines of Humana’s Child Aid Doornkop. This section will build on these constituents. More specifically, it will focus on the strategies of the area leaders to develop these constituents of professional legitimacy. In this study, these efforts are labeled as “professional legitimation.” Legitimation is treated as a non-conspicuous, as well as a conscious, well-deliberated attempt of area leaders to account for their actions. Usually this legitimation is embedded in the interests, values and knowledge of the environment. During the field study, this explicit tuning (“discursive accountability”) was monitored during a number of focus group meetings, and to a lesser degree in individual interviews.

7.5.1. Messaging as legitimation strategy to obtain acquisition

In § 7.4.1, acquisition has been identified as a crucial constituent of the area leaders’ professional mandate. Acquisition refers to the ability to mobilize residents around their own concerns. One of the first challenges was to handle a very persistent form of “abandonment” whereby local residents stopped considering alternative ways to live their lives. After all, overcoming the abandonment of this goal might favor an initial engagement. That acquisition seemed very closely associated with the block members’ awareness about their life situations and alternative life strategies. According to the area leaders, lively interaction with the local residents exemplifying a sense of mutuality also is closely linked to their acquisition efforts. Hereby, the area leaders marked the creation of realistic expectations about their own involvement as a crucial element of acquisition. Acquisition supports the professional engagement of the area leaders with the residents of the blocks under their supervision.

The question is, how the area leaders are able to engage in the process of acquisition. As mentioned before, they regularly have to face resistance among the local residents. Psychological challenges, such as apathy, but also everyday challenges, including physical immobility and illness, have to be dealt with. Moreover, residents are pragmatic and weigh the pros and cons of becoming engaged, like immediate or future rewards. Area leaders have to be sensitive to such considerations and have to develop appropriate responses. Whether or not these community workers’ responses merit initial support for community development efforts in the different blocks, is phrased as a matter of successful professional legitimation in this study.

When analyzing the reflections of area leaders on how they succeed in acquisition, a number of general features could be distinguished. Together, these features add up to what best can be described as a form of messaging. After all, the reports of these community workers reveal a strong inclination to deliver a specific message, which simultaneously needs to be congruent with the local cultural and religious traditions. This requires, first of all, a profound openness to the local cultural life and indigenous practices. By being open to the local ways of living, one could engage in a dialogue, merging the local “symbolic universe” with CAD’s local development agenda stressing economic self-reliance.

As will be illustrated in the following paragraphs, area leaders engage here in a variety of messaging techniques, first of all by teaching their constituents new ways of thinking and doing. In comparison to the nurturing strategy in Chelsea, the messaging strategy not only mobilizes, but also
teaches about how local residents should understand their problems. Furthermore, reaching out and inviting people to a meeting to discuss their life’s challenges also appears to be part of this strategy. Moreover, appeals to self-interest that get the block residents hooked into the Humana philosophy of development, are combined with new perspectives on the future. Finally, the development of a new moral framework also seems crucial in the process of acquisition. The question is, how area leaders apply these messaging techniques to manage eventual challenges to their efforts to acquire willingness among the local community members to participate. In that sense, in these early stages of acquisition, the legitimation strategy of the Doornkop area leaders is more comprehensive, than the nurturing strategy of the Chelsea organizers. Where the latter try to address specific local urgencies, the former not only addresses local urgencies, but also presents a framework for how to understand these urgencies.

Teaching. Starting with the first aspect of this mission, the teaching of new ways of thinking and doing seems closely linked to the area leaders’ ability to bring clarity to the lives of the local residents around urgent issues. Area leaders themselves receive, with great regularity, schooling at the CAD center around community issues, including gardening, entrepreneurship, or health. It became obvious during informal talks, but also during community meetings that this knowledge could well be an asset in the building of a professional relationship with the block residents. In fact, a distinction between them as area leaders and the community was made on the basis of their advanced knowledge. As area leaders, they are more knowledgeable about things, and are supposed to bring that knowledge to the community, as the community is sometimes seen as “ignorant.”

A discussion that emerged during a focus group meeting is illustrative for this distinction between area leaders’ knowledgeability and the ignorance of the block residents. The topic was about the way the area leader should act while mobilizing block residents for a community information meeting on home gardening. In exchange for the residents’ participation, tools for gardening would be handed out. The question was whether the area leader should mention that people would receive tools, or just explain to them that the goal was to learn about home gardening. This choice between appealing to direct gain (tools) or to a long term-gain (knowledge about gardening) seemed to exemplify an everyday dilemma. At first, almost unilaterally, the area leaders chose to emphasize the educational (long-term) aspect to the community: the fact that the block members would learn how to grow their own food around the house. However, after exploring the ethical aspect (is it justifiable not mentioning that tools for gardening would be handed out), and the result (only a few people showed up), a consensus about how the area leader should have acted arose.

Armand: “it is also important to pass the message, (...) so that people can understand correctly.”

While Elisa elaborated:

“It’s important to be clear when you want to work with the community. If you want them to [learn about home gardening, jg], clearly telling them, accurate and on point, so they should know, even ask questions, not found with a mistake that you haven’t explained to them in detail.”

Later Elisa would explain in more detail how she favors that openness:

“OK, this is going to happen, and I will bring this, and then discuss with them first. Then, discuss with them face to face, and then and also with the other committees, and talk, ‘This is what’s going to happen next.’ So it’s also preparation, thinking ahead.”

This quote illustrates how area leaders can deliberate on the strategies for acquiring participation from the community. First of all, we see strategic awareness at play in the sequence of actions
(“Then and then...”). Secondly, we see it in Elisa admitting to “thinking ahead.” Thirdly, her reflection shows the use of cognitive resources. She makes the different interests of the possible participants discursive, and by doing so, the community becomes knowledgeable about the tension between immediate gain (tools) and long-term gain (gardening skills).

**Inviting and reaching out.** Where teaching is here an aspect of the messaging strategy, stressing the virtues of postponing immediate satisfaction, the second aspect, of inviting and reaching out is linked to more immediate pragmatic concerns of the community. The communicative register of the Doornkop community workers switches from a knowledge-based one to aiming to reflect the immediate concerns of their constituents. The somewhat wavering start of the Men’s Support Group exemplified this. Initially, it was set-up as a co-production between the social auxiliary and one of the area leaders. But at the first two or three meetings, only a few men showed up. In the preparation, during the meetings, and in the evaluation afterwards, it was noticeable how the two coaches tried to link two contrasting assessments. On the one side was the urgency of the men-in-need as documented in the study into absent fatherhood (Mavungu Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka, 2013), a few months before. This study highlighted the vulnerable position of the Black man in current day South Africa, more specifically in Doornkop. Men were portrayed, talking about their fragile position as a father. Sometimes their (ex-) wives blackmailed them to pay in order to see their children; at the same time, they were struggling to make ends meet as a day laborer, sometimes far away from their (former) families.

This study (Mavungu Eddy et al., 2013) into the current position of Doornkop men, clearly signaled an urgency. But on the other side, was the question whether a weekly men’s group meeting would attract enough men from the blocks. Moreover, Armand realized that despite his intensive outreach efforts, they had to face reality. First of all, according to Armand, some of the men’s spouses would oppose their participation, claiming it to be unnecessary; secondly, a considerable part of possible participants could be at work or else looking for a day job. Thirdly, most men probably did not realize what the support group could bring them once they took part (“Most men are ignorant”, one of the participants, a minister, tended to say during the meetings).

These contrasting assessments (existing urgency versus the de facto ability and willingness to acquire a constituency based on these urgencies) led to a strategy that was characteristic for similar challenges in Doornkop: the inviting-outreaching approach. This approach is based on the granting of influence to the local residents. The domain of influence could vary: whether it concerns the design of the activities, the content of the activities, or even the goal of the activities. On a structural level, the Doornkop community was invited to the Annual General Meeting to reflect on the CAD’s performance. June reacts at the very concrete level of the block activities, that the best way to mobilize people is to let them engage in:

”...some things that keep them busy (...). I don’t know, maybe sometimes we (...) involve them in our topic, like what we can do, like [a] small workshop ... We can do a small workshop with them and ... They must bring a topic and stick on it."

Armand and the social auxiliary were prepared to be open to all aspects of the men’s support group. This became apparent during the opening words of J. When he first was inclined to bring up the study of men in Doornkop, he became more and more open to suggestions about the topics that might be on the minds of the few men attending, possibly leading to their willingness to become engaged in the support group. The question is how this engagement is being triggered.

**Catching.** Somewhat related, but at the same time appealing to the immediate needs of the community, is a third feature of the messaging strategy: getting people “caught.” Here, appeals also
are made to pragmatic motives for local residents to become mobilized, but self-interest is more obvious. It is a widely favored anecdote in South Africa that if you want people to visit community meetings, be sure to provide “refreshments” (soda or Coca Cola), or to promise them food parcels. This may be true in general; and especially for short-term involvement, it is extremely effective in situations where many people suffer from hunger. But as one area leader remarked, reflecting on the long-term effectiveness of playing the self-interest card:

“If you want people [to join] by telling him what they want to hear, they come here just for food parcels, [and] tomorrow they want even more. They won't even come, and then the attendance register [will just have] one person.

However, area leaders do indeed make explicit appeals to the self-interest of the people. But usually, these appeals are mixed with other considerations. If it is the goal of area leaders to catch people as a way to establish an initial constituency for the development efforts of CAD, they claim to combine this self-interest with, for instance, clarification (a cognitive resource) and justification (a moral resource). In other words, they “tune” the appeals to the immediate needs (by providing drinks, food, medicine or care) either towards an educational effort or into a developmental frame. Exemplary for the first type of catching effort, is the provision of food parcels. These parcels, paid for by the Department of Social Development, are provided at the center of CAD. Usually, families who are not yet officially registered as an inhabitant of Doornkop can apply for them. Social care givers, as well as area leaders, can make poor families they meet in the blocks eligible for this food support. Only the most basic items are distributed with ingredients such as pap, tea and soap. According to the area leaders, the catch, or the hook, attached to the food parcels distribution is obvious. The parcels bring the people out into the open, enabling CAD to register them for eventual government support grants, family and health care. At the same time, the area leaders can educate them about the Block Action Groups nearby, and other CAD-projects such as the income-generation and home gardening. If one has pap to eat, but not enough pap for a whole month, it might be worthwhile to consider growing spinach around the house. Area leaders also combine appeals to self-interest and education about rights and benefits at the block level. The Block Action Groups, for instance, provide possibilities for that. They literally support people to enlarge their life world by crossing the borders of their block. For many, especially elderly residents still being accustomed to the restricted mobility during the Apartheid era, the block is a destiny. However, in order to buy material for sewing hats or uniforms, it is indeed necessary to cross the border of one’s block to visit a market at the other end of the ward. In a similar manner, area leaders are deliberating on the moral dimension of their mission. Here, self-interest (earning money by sewing) and making things knowledgeable (educating about the world outside the blocks), merge with a third legitimating asset: justification, or accounting for the “right way” of doing things in life (the righteous techniques). In order to understand how this justification works, it is necessary to tap into the worldview that most of the area leaders share. For them, growing up in a post-Apartheid society, the community is charged with a special responsibility to also free themselves from welfare dependency. Key words, characterizing the behavior that area leaders appreciate in individuals are togetherness, responsibility, self-sufficiency, and endurance.

In sum, the general strategy underlying the acquisition of community engagement in Doornkop can be labeled as “messaging.” Elements of teaching can be distinguished in the area leaders’ reflections, but also aspects of invitation and outreach. A third element, is the effort to catch, or hook, potential participants in the blocks by providing the local residents with both mundane, practical things, as well as with new ways of thinking and acting. Moral assumptions about what constitutes a
good life especially permeated their deliberations on the challenges of acquisition. As will become clear in the next section that deals with the legitimation strategies to secure a more active form of support (appropriation), these moral considerations are complemented by pragmatic and cognitive rationales. Analyzing how area leaders legitimize the transfer of control of the community development initiatives to the block residents, an intriguing, versatile strategy emerges.

### 7.5.2. Appreciating as legitimation strategy to obtain appropriation

In § 7.4.2, “appropriation” was identified as a central feature of what area leaders consider as elementary in situations of active support. Appropriation signifies an emerging shift in balance, a shift towards a “sense of ownership.” Area leaders see appropriation in an increase of the number of participants, such as in block-based income generating projects, or in the weekly block action meetings. However, the acknowledgment by residents of the relevance of the block as the place where things happen, also could be seen as a form of appropriation. It highlights that residents start to actively contribute to the local development efforts, instigated by CAD and government agencies, such as the Department of Social Development. Area leaders discern in that process of appropriation appeals from the local residents to remain aware of the needs and concerns of the blocks. When analyzing how they deliberately “manage” that process of appropriation by the block residents, a number of legitimating features emerge; and these can best be summarized as forms of *appreciation*. Appreciation can either refer to an increase in valuation by the owner or by an outsider. Several times, area leaders who were going out into the blocks to inspect a number of new home gardens were seen openly praising the hard labor of the resident and the beautiful spinach leaves growing around the house. By appreciating that praise, the residents start to appreciate their own efforts. In reflections about their attempts to create or restore a sense of ownership in the blocks, different forms of valuation as well as of recognition of value could be found. Each of these forms of appreciating could be linked to different legitimating resources, of which the pragmatic resources (influence, disposition, exchange) were the most frequently recurring.

**Transference.** One of the most dominant features of such appreciation, and at the same time the most intriguing one, can best be labeled as “transference.” Transference, coined by Freud (1960), is a term commonly used in psychotherapy to depict situations where people unconsciously transfer their own childhood experiences onto actual situations. Usually, this transfer is seen as a hindrance to live “in the present,” since it mostly concerns forgotten, suppressed emotions for which the current person bears no responsibility.

But just as transference can be made useful in therapy as it becomes a topic to investigate past and present positive and negative experiences with people (Schwartz-Salant, 1984), so too can past experiences of the area leaders unconsciously transfer in their current interactions with the local people. As mentioned previously, most of the area leaders started as a volunteer. For instance, through schooling at the CAD Centre, they could develop themselves as a home-based caregiver, a project leader, and eventually an area leader. Humana’s adagio of “for the people by the people” stresses the use of indigenous leadership and locally developed strategies. That way, the value of local practices and knowledge is being appreciated, and *proliferated*. As a result, area leaders are explicitly challenged, and indeed also feel obliged to find local answers to local problems. Here emerges the normativity, the moral grounding, for their engagement with the local people to appropriate their own development. Transference here first of all appreciates the solidarity between the area leader and his constituents in the blocks: “I once was where you are now. Your challenges used
to be mine, and I have been able to deal with them; and actually, they still are mine, and this helps me to understand your challenges.”

At the same time, area leaders have moved on. They have become primus inter pares in the community. They represent, or exemplify, “what people like us are able to achieve” and use their past experiences to account for their own development which is framed as experience, not expertise. But these experiences are not explicit, they stay unconscious, only to become visible in normative statements. These statements formulate how the people they supervise on the blocks should deal with life’s challenges.

In order to transfer these “morally” appropriate techniques or procedures, it is pertinent that area leaders keep the people involved in overcoming their welfare dependency and poverty. Area leaders also need to be committed to the fate of the community and be fully involved in its development; otherwise they are at risk of losing their status as first among equals. In order to legitimize the normativity that goes with appropriation, their intrinsic bonds have to be reaffirmed every time. Emphasizing that the right and duty to have maximum influence in defining their own needs and designing activities is central and essential in this transference. Here, appropriation emerges. As Rose states:

“We teach them to not depend on the project. Justly put: we need to take the project in[to, jg] the field (...) And we need to train their minds. They mustn’t rely on the project. Because they themselves they can form a project.”

The question is why Rose has so much trust in the ability of the block residents to form a project. The answer might lie in what she herself has been able to accomplish. Transference refers to the solidarity that functions as a foundation for the transfer of the learning experiences of the area leaders. Once arriving at this point, they can be of use for their community; they have had to face a great deal of personal challenges. So, for instance, when discussing whether or not to negotiate with the local councilor about funding a pre-school, one area leader was very clear:

AL: “You must fight for what you want, before you can achieve things.”

June, also a novice area leader, explained how she tends to approach the people of her block:

“We’re supposed to make an open discussion with them.”

Interviewer: “An open discussion?”

June: “Yeah. You must ... must lead them ...Not to come with decisions. Suggestions. (...) You must involve them. Not to come with a decision.”

In this last reflection on her method of letting the residents under her supervision take control, two seemingly contradictory considerations come forward: “You must lead them” and “You must involve them.”

Through transference, area leaders combine the “unconscious” morality derived from their growth as a Doornkop resident with a display of solidarity. This seems to be required to be and stay the primus inter pares. That way, they can safely hand over control of the block’s community development activities to the residents.

**Translation.** Another approach that area leaders report ensures the process of appropriation is connected to making appeals to the self-interests of the local residents. That self-interest is usually very basic, such as the need for food, for safety, for health, and for the support of their children. These needs are used by area leaders to engage with the local residents in a form of “translation”
which is a way of bending the immediate self-interest to what they see as more appropriate ways of living. For instance, the programs linked to home gardening of Child Aid Doornkop, provide a tangible answer to the lack of food in the blocks. Almost every resident has a small piece of land around the house. This can be cultivated, and with some daily care, vegetables can grow to supplement the pap. Area leaders educate the people on how to maintain the ground so it can be used as a vegetable garden. In the CAD center, vegetables are also grown and sold to the local community members for very affordable prices.

But sometimes, area leaders find the speed and effectiveness of the appropriation of the development process frustrated by what local residents see as beneficiary for the status quo. Processes of appropriation, carefully and patiently guided over time by area leaders suddenly can come to a halt when incidents occur, such as a rainstorm that produces floods over the community garden or sets the shacks under water. Under such circumstances, the survival modus, with short-term solutions, tends to become dominant again.

**Scaffolding.** Somewhat related to translation is scaffolding. Scaffolding usually refers to the construction of a structure that supports the development of a building. In education it also depicts a development strategy to bring pupils to a higher level of knowledge or skills. A form of scaffolding in the educational sense, is tutors’ “showing” how to perform a task. In Doornkop, this scaffolding as a technique to arrange a process of appropriation occurs when area leaders refer to their own disposition and their ability to make things knowledgeable. Exemplary is the realization, mentioned earlier in a quote of Destiny, that people see her as an example, and that by living her life, she shows how other people can deal with the challenges she had to deal with.

In sum, the general strategy area leaders apply to support a process of appropriation can be characterized by appreciation. This appreciation emphasizes the affinity of the Doornkop community workers with the residents. Implicitly, this form of legitimation transfers the values and knowledge the area leaders have been able to acquire onto the community. More explicitly, the area leaders appeal to the self-interest of the residents, and translate these immediate concerns into new strategies to support themselves. In other ways, the area leaders see themselves as mentors applying their own experiences as an example for how the residents can develop and grow. By means of this scaffolding, the process of appropriation is gaining strength.

While this appreciation strategy, which combines pragmatic, moral and cognitive resources in legitimation, aims to consolidate the development process in the community, one can wonder how this development process can be consolidated over time. Area leaders phrased this situation of continuity as “coherence”, and as will be clear in the next section, an active and versatile legitimation strategy is required.

**7.5.3. Directing as legitimation strategy to manage coherence**

As discussed in § 7.4.3, the Doornkop’ area leaders tend to strongly associate continuity of their engagement with the block residents with coherence of the community development process. They consider it paramount to be able to create consistency in their interventions. This is shown by carefully reflecting on how to create a predictable environment for the activities of the community, such as a fixed place to convene, and the weekly regularity of the Block Action Group meetings. That concern for coherence is further shown in ways of dealing with unpredictable or unforeseen incidents, such as a flood or a death in the family of one of the participants. Moreover, it appeared cru-
cial for the long-term flourishing of the people in the blocks that area leaders manage their own expectations, but also those of community members, with regard to the efficacy of their efforts.

In short, coherence requires the area leaders and other professionals working with the community to create logic in the development process, - in place, in time, and in relevance. Most obvious in these considerations about continuity is the centrality the area leaders’ claim – in varying degrees of explicitness- for their role in directing that coherence. When explaining goals, convincing the people of the importance of cooperation, or framing the accomplishments of the residents, area leaders need to be prominent as well as “omnipresent.” At least, this is what emerges from their reflections on a series of incidents, either real-life or constructed for discussion during focus group meetings. Indeed, and as will become evident in the following paragraphs, it is safe to say that the area leaders assume a sort of professional centrality. This active and visible centrality enables them to acquire a directing role. After all, directing as in the movies implies that the area leaders represent an attractive narrative about the human condition, as well as provide a methodical approach embedded in the local customs (scenario). And of course, directing also must provide a clear and rewarding role for the block residents (the community as actors) in these settings.

Narrative. The first component is the narrative with which the area leaders bring focus to their engagement with the local people. Central here is a pragmatic logic: the narrative has to be able to create a positive mood. Therefore, the activities and engagements of the block residents must be immersed with an appealing undertone. As pointed out before, a great many of the reflections of area leaders show “pastoral” warmth. Qualities such as togetherness, hope, strength, endurance, sacrifice and respect are connected to the activities. If one wants to create an enduring commitment, it seems crucial to both positively acknowledge the considerable everyday life challenges of the residents that could frustrate that commitment, as well as to simultaneously phrase these burdens in a manner so that these experiences are transformed into a mobilizing force. The reflection of June is exemplary for that positive phrasing. When one day, she was doing a number of house visits in her block, she came to know that only a few people attended the last Block Action Group. She had not been able to be present there herself. Driving back to the CAD center, she seemed disappointed. However, later on, when asked about her assessment of what she heard, she followed with an account involving another area leader (at that time unknown to the researcher) who joined the conversation:

June: “Yeah, it happened. Some of them they won’t come, but some of them, they do come, even if I’m not there. But they do come. And do their handwork, discuss about their things. (...) The following week, when I came, they will address me, you know, ‘Last week this and that and that.’”

Other area leader: “And you know, it’s the respect also. Because you have to respect one another.”

June: “Yeah ... So...”

Other area leader: “If we’re holding [each other] with respect, I think there is nothing that will block us.”

June: “Yeah.”

This dialogue referred to June’s experience of being held responsible by the local residents for a low level of attendance at the weekly block meeting. As people started to gossip in her absence, she felt as if the residents did not respect her.

Short dialogues, such as the one above, are characteristic for the narrative that area leaders create about how they manage the challenges to keep people involved over time. Here, it is June and her colleague engaging in an inquiry about what roots that continuous commitment, and they came
up with respect as a positive marker for continuity. Yet as the daily life in Doornkop is more often than not characterized by situations of discontinuity, it could be worthwhile to see how the area leaders adapt their narrative when things do not go as expected.

A discussion one afternoon on unexpected events is exemplary for how to manage disruptions of coherence. In this case, it was about how to communicate the fact that a new area leader would replace the existing one not an uncommon situation in Doornkop. The question was, “What should the leader leaving the area do?” After all, it would present a disruption in the support of the block residents. Rose, an experienced area leader, demonstrated the narrative about continuity and change as she reflected on the moment she had to tell the residents of a block under her supervision that she was going to leave:

“‘So if I am not there, are you guys going to die or are you going (...) to feel bad? Or if I am no longer around with you, are you going to be unable to work or to do things for yourselves? I prepared what you [should do, jg]? (...) so even when things turned around (...) they understand. Because I never said in front of them, ‘Okay guys, I am mobilizing you; you’re going to do things good, everything will go [fine].’ (...) I said to them, ‘You know what ... Things are difficult sometimes. But what we are doing here is a start-up. (...) We are just calling you, making you to be aware of things that might happen in the future. Things won’t go the way you and me expect things to [go]. But we need to stand by ourselves.’ So I did prepare that. So when we break ... we brought the news to them, it easy for them. And as they said, ‘You have explained it to us. We know what is.’ ... And you know, others they came to me and said, ‘We still remember then that you used to ... The Project when you were around’.”

Rose’s story exemplifies the crucial role of developing a coherent narrative to secure the commitment of the local people over time. First of all, it clearly breathes “management of expectations” (“if I am no longer around with you” and “Things won’t go the way you and me expect things to go”). Secondly, the reflection accounts for how she provided a narrative of self-determination at the start of her involvement. She challenged the community to remain in control of their direction (“If I am no longer around with you, are you going to be unable to work or to do things for yourselves?”). Thirdly, Rose recalled the efficacy of her original narrative, when she observed that the moment she eventually quit as an area leader, the people acknowledged how important it was for them, that she prepared them that this moment eventually would come.

Scenario. However, it is not only this “warm” narrative that area leaders use to secure continuity to the development of the blocks, as illustrated in the previous paragraphs. When area leaders discuss how to handle issues of continuity, more strategic references also emerge. These strategic notions refer to thinking ahead, indeed to anticipation. But when zooming in to their reflections, another, deeper layer becomes visible, one that reveals elements of morality and knowledgeableability. If one speaks of a narrative, as the way area leaders secure or restore the persistence of the local people’s involvement, then there is also a scenario about how that involvement should be managed. One of these scenarios deals with the combination of localization (technique) and information (knowledgeability). Information must go from the CAD center to the blocks: the knowledge about growing crops, for instance, demonstrated in the CAD center’s large model garden: which area leaders and social care givers had to distribute to the different areas of Doornkop. Rosetta, the project leader responsible for sustainable environmental practices, tended to go out regularly to the blocks to check the effectiveness of that localization and the education of home gardening. As outlined in §7.4.3, most of the challenges with regard to the continuity of the local residents’ commitment revolve around coherence in time, in place and in relevance. Managing continuity means creating a sense of coherence in community development efforts. A second scenario combining technique and knowledgeableability, describes how to handle disturbances in relevance. A discussion among area lead-
ers about how to deal with a request from an external organization that offered to distribute tools for gardening in the community was exemplary. There were two options: simply telling the local people that tools would be handed out, or announcing it as a workshop on gardening. The first option would make a direct appeal to people’s self-interest, possibly resulting in a higher attendance; while the second option represented a more sustainable approach to self-sufficiency, asking residents to at least invest some time in becoming educated about home gardening. Not surprisingly, the area leaders choose the second option. Elisa, one of the area leaders argued:

“The area leader should explain that it’s not all about agriculture, but only about education. Then they would understand more. It’s about the way that [they are] supposed to get the message that you explain to them.”

Asked if they would do the same, even if that would displease the donor, another anecdote came on the table about the distribution of food parcels. Rose recalled a situation where residents were invited by the announcement that food parcels would be handed out. A considerable group of people attended. Looking back, she admits it was a risky move as:

“...they need to work for themselves [...] they need to do something to stand for themselves and [it is] not about what we have to give to them.

Later she explained:

“That [is] the way of disciplining. You must attend the meeting, food parcels or not.”

In these reflections, the second scenario, combining morality and knowledgeability becomes visible: An area leader should both be strict in acknowledging that people should never be mobilized on the basis of mere self-interest and at the same time, be clear about their intentions.

**Role taking.** Analyzing the reflections of the area leaders on challenges of coherence, two aspects of directing have been identified so far. First of all, area leaders tend to provide an appealing narrative to address incidents in the daily lives of the residents that could endanger their full participation in the different community development initiatives. A second aspect is the scenario, with which area leaders stress moral viewpoints on how to handle events that could challenge the continuity of the community’s involvement over time. A third aspect, arising in the reflections of area leaders, refers to the role of the community itself. Take for instance, how area leaders deal with a disappointing attendance in the Block Action Groups, signaling a possible lack of future engagement. A strike, not uncommon in South Africa, could temporarily dry up the financial means of families to invest in the Block Action Group fund, a community-based form of local business development. This requires that each of the participating block members donate weekly a small sum to buy materials, such as fabrics to make clothes. A sudden illness in the family can prevent women from attending the weekly block meetings. Sometimes, area leaders are confronted with initiatives that risk coming to an end. In such situations, area leaders seem to start assuming a typical “dialectical” approach. Here, dialectical refers to a reformulation of possible adversarial circumstances into a new developmental challenge, one that renders the residents in an active role confronting their challenging life situations. The follow-up to the Men’s Support Group presented such a challenge in coherence. After a few sessions with a low turnout, Armand decided to invite, a neighboring men’s action group. This could possibly provide the participating members a new perspective, a new more time-resisting model for men’s self-help, reformulating the role of the men as carriers of the group.

In sum, the area leaders’ strategy to bring coherence in their professional involvement, and the development process in general, can be characterized as “directing.” First of all, directing implies the
development of an attractive, appealing narrative that navigates them and local people through challenging, unforeseen life events and keeps them focused on long-term goals. Secondly, a scenario about how to handle these life events appears to be crucial. A third aspect of this directing strategy involves granting the community influence by letting them adopt “roles,” fitting into the narrative and scenario of community empowerment.

7.5.4. Exemplifying as legitimation strategy to obtain authority

It is essential for area leaders to build and sustain a steady authority among the block residents. This authority is, as we saw in § 7.4.4, based on their ability to function as a role model for the local people. Most area leaders are, after all, also part of the Doornkop community. Furthermore, working for Child Aid Doornkop has enabled them to develop themselves, for instance as volunteers, as a home-based caregivers or as health counselors. This experience puts them in a special position with the community, that of a primus inter pares. According to the area leaders, this advancement also provides them with a sense of authority, required to professionally engage with the block residents. It helps during the regular house visits or at the weekly block meetings; people will take them seriously if they bring in topics on health, on home gardening, entrepreneurship, or skills development.

Area leaders associate this sense of authority with qualities such as veracity, trust, and effectiveness. Veracity refers to being transparent about intentions and strategies. In order to gain trust, area leaders have to see that the efforts of the community lead to tangible results.

Obviously, this sense of authority is not stable over time. Area leaders tend to struggle to keep their authority intact, as circumstances are hazardous and people have to face challenging life situations. There is tendency to return to survival modes in times of trouble, when for instance, a family member gone ill demands attention. Reflexes, such as the dependency on government grants, are deeply rooted in the consciousness of a great many Black South Africans. “People check me out,” June once remarked during a visit to her block where she found out the attendance during the weekly Block Action Group had been marginal. According to the area leaders, checking out (“How will he or she react to us?”) tends to merit specific responses from the area leaders, strategies to develop and restore authority that can be best described as “exemplifying” which refers to strategies where area leaders display ideal-typical responses to challenging situations. By setting their own lives as examples, area leaders seek to develop authority. This exemplifying is a complex strategy. It requires carefully balancing between the acknowledgment of common backgrounds with the residents and the embodiment of productive, development-oriented life strategies. These two ends of the spectrum do not mix easily.

Not surprisingly, one of the central features of the exemplifying strategy is normativity, which generally works in two ways. First, it entails the proclamation of specific norms that all should adhere to. Second, normativity has to be lived by example. In that manner, it refers to an aspect of legitimation whereby area leaders combine references to the justness of dealing with life’s challenges (techniques) with character (disposition), and - to a lesser degree- to the possession of specific knowledge. This normativity was, at first, quite elusive. Subtle utterances such as “We do things out of passion” are exemplary, or reactions to situations at the CAD Center: “People are ignorant; we have to educate them.” Here, references to individual character and just practice, or due course, are combined.
In order to amplify this implicit normativity, area leaders were asked during a focus group meeting to reflect on the following fictional dilemma derived from a similar real-life situation. In this story, the area leader was reluctant to advance the weekly fee of 2 ZAR for a member of the Block Action Group who was short of cash as a result of the repair of her leaking roof. As other community members found out, they questioned the area leader’s loyalty, because she apparently was not prepared to help out a member in need. Her authority was publicly challenged. The question was, “How could she legitimize her choice to refuse not to jump in for the unfortunate block member, and furthermore, how could she restore her authority as an area leader?” Starting with the first issue, the grounds for her actions, the area leaders found that in order to remain trustworthy, one should always be impartial. Otherwise, everyone could ask to jump in financially. Furthermore, Rose remarked that the Block Action Groups should function on behalf of the block members, not in the interest of the area leader. This methodological consideration led Elisa to reply:

“So that is why (...) people [become] relaxed. It makes people relaxed when they are not able to pay, or to support their own house [somebody helps, jg]. So they are getting spoiled (...) with the food parcels (...) and then after when they are supposed to [do] something for themselves, they rely on the Project.”

Armand emphasized the importance of the impartiality of the area leader:

“So, I think sometimes we don’t have to be outside every day. We don’t have duties to give fish (...) [We] also have to teach them how to get fish (...) These [people], they come up with lot of stories. They need to come up with some plan, ideas. How to teach people that they cannot always depend on [the area leader, jg]?”

The fact that area leaders implicitly acknowledged the importance of strong character (disposition) is illustrative for this discussion. It refers to a character that cannot be compromised and does not give in to conflicts and immediate needs of individual community members. This character has to withstand pressure. At the same time, there is also a method, a due course to defend (technique). The normativity is further displayed in statements such as: “Don’t give people fish” (or they might become dependent). The legitimation of the area leaders’ actions rest in the development of the logic of self-reliance; and their actions have to embody that logic. The area leader should react in this situation by acknowledging that he or she is different from the community (which tends towards dependency), and which favors a strict method of working towards responsible block members. It is not unthinkable, that normativity provides area leaders with the authority to withstand challenging situations and harsh dilemmas while working in the community.

This story deliberately was brought in to provoke discussions about what the respective responsibilities of area leaders and the community are. Of course, this is partly an artificial divide. After all, the majority of the area leaders are part of that same community. They also live in one of the 12 blocks, sometimes in families who have been there for generations. Moreover, they profit from the same arrangements as their constituency does; just as the people they work with, they also live in government-funded housing; if area leaders have children, they also receive child support. Nevertheless, during interviews, area leaders were stimulated to search for a logic that could legitimize their specific position as primus inter pares. Here, a second feature of the exemplifying strategy emerged: affirmation: “I can be an area leader, because of my personal qualities and my knowledge.” Self-affirmation, hence, expresses the awareness of area leaders that they indeed are living by example, and that this exemplary role contributes to their authority as an area leader. Analyzing the acknowledgments of this awareness, elements of character (disposition) and expertise (knowledge) become
visible. A short dialogue with Destiny is exemplary. Asked about what qualifies her as an area leader, she says she is special:

“Because others see that in me. (laughs) (...) I cannot judge myself. I am just saying, ‘Okay, I ... I have to challenge life.’ That’s it. There I think I am different.”

Interviewer: “That’s what you’re saying also to them?”

Destiny: “Yeah.”

Here, Destiny acknowledges her special position in the community, based on her inclination to challenge her own life. Others (the community) apparently convey this disposition as a respectable one, consequently granting Destiny a sense of authority.

This conversation was private, so it could just have been a way to position herself to the researcher. But on another occasion, a discussion in a fast food restaurant between three area leaders revealed the same logic. It illustrates how the process of self-affirmation works. The researcher inquired about the challenges of working with the community. One of the area leaders talked about a situation where people were rude to her.

Interviewer: “Rude? What do you mean by rude?”

AL 1: “They told me like, no respect.”

Interviewer: “Oh, no respect?”

AL1: “They don’t respect.”

Interviewer: “No?”

AL1: “They just talk ... You know, there are people when they talk, they don’t think of other people.”

Interviewer: “As an Area Leader? What do you mean by that? That they judge you?”

AL2: “[They] just look at you.”

Interviewer: “Yes? Do you experience that too sometimes?”

AL 2: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “That people say, ‘Who are you and what are you doing here?’”

AL 2: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “And how do you deal with that?”

AL3: “Friendly. And show love. And give them support. Make them listen to you. (...) Yeah. We [need, jg] to be different from them. What we are.”

In this conversation, area leaders reflect on how they manage challenges to their authority. Again, self-affirmation becomes evident (“We need to be different”). In order to overcome the challenges of authority during their encounters with the residents, it seems paramount to exemplify “good behavior” - being friendly and supportive.

In sum, the strategy of area leaders to create and sustain authority can be typed as a form of exemplifying. Analyzing the exemplifying strategy highlights two aspects: firstly, the aspect of normativity, with which the area leaders demonstrate “the right way of handling life’s issues” by example; and secondly, the aspect of self-confirmation of their “different” position in the community; and the obligation that is attached to that different position in order to display or embody that normativity.
### 7.5.5. Summary of the legitimation strategies of the Doornkop area leaders

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**Table 7.2.** Overview of the legitimation strategies and their resources, linked to the respective constituents of legitimacy, reported by the Doornkop area leaders.
7.6. General summary of the findings in this chapter

In this chapter, both the foundations of professional legitimacy, as well as the legitimation strategies of the community workers of Child Aid Doornkop, have been explored. Child aid Doornkop is one of the very few NGO’s working in an area where the majority is chronically ill. The “area leaders” are part of the Doornkop community, and they have been selected and educated to implement a locality-based approach. This development strategy aims to strengthen the economic position of the Doornkop residents. Within a comprehensive system of government grants for the many ill, poor and socially challenged, these community workers try to reverse welfare dependency by favoring local entrepreneurship and skills development. In their daily interactions with the residents, the area leaders face resistance against change, but they also have to deal with the precarious life circumstances of the population.

Exploring the contextual constituents of the area leaders’ professional mandate yielded the following:

The first constituent, or building block, is acquisition of the residents’ willingness to become engaged. This form of initial, passive support is associated with the development of awareness, the emergence of a form of “rapport” and realistic expectations of the possible contribution of the area leaders to the development of the residents.

The second constituent is appropriation. This form of active support refers to a developing shift in “ownership” of the development process, that is from the area leaders to the local people. Furthermore, appropriation also holds moral connotations. Among other things, appropriation is associated with expansion in size and intensity of the engagement of the block residents in a specific moral framework of economic empowerment and independence from welfare grants.

The third constituent is coherence. This expresses the area leaders’ concern for continuity, and refers to consistency in the locality of activities, but also the time frame and the relevance of the development process for the local people.

The fourth constituent of the area leaders’ mandate is authority. This refers to the credibility of their presence, and is based on the common background, and shared experiences of the community and the area leaders. As role models, able to develop themselves, they embody the local development strategy. At the same time, these community workers see it as crucial to their authority to establish trust and to work effectively towards tangible results for the residents.

Linked to each of these four constituents of professional legitimacy, are the legitimation strategies, depicting the operational dimension of legitimation. These strategies are based on the reconstructions made by the area leaders of the way they manage challenges of legitimacy. This study considers these strategies as a result of professional deliberation, where pragmatic, moral and/or cognitive resources already present in the context are converted into legitimating capital. These strategies enable community development professionals to be, act and relate in a professional capacity.

First of all, in order to be able to handle challenges in acquisition, area leaders resort to a messaging strategy. Here, different aspects can be distinguished. First of all, there is teaching, combining the use of pragmatic (appeals to self-interest) and cognitive resources (clarifying life’s issues). A second aspect of messaging is invitation and outreach, a form of messaging that predominantly tries to acquire the attention of the residents by making appeals to the possible advantages of becoming
engaged with the community. A third aspect of messaging, catching, aims to mobilize local residents by linking their immediate concerns to either educationally or morally relevant themes.

The legitimation strategy used to obtain challenges in processes of community appropriation, has been typed as appreciation, which refers to either implicit or explicit valuation. This valuation concerns the intentional shift in the community development activities from the area leaders towards the residents. With implicit appreciation, area leaders tend to express trust, grant influence, and provide knowledge to support local people to develop a sense of ownership of, for instance, their gardening and entrepreneurial efforts. Explicitly, area leaders engage in underscoring the benefits of taking responsibility for one’s life. This translation of pragmatic motives into a developmental logic, has its counterpart in the third form of appreciation, namely scaffolding. Here, area leaders adopt a role modeling approach. As a tutor, he or she shows appropriate behavior for taking responsibility for one’s life, reversing the process of dependency on government grants and food parcels.

The third legitimation strategy, the one favoring coherence in the community development process, can be characterized as directing. This direction strategy demands an active endeavor of the area leaders to first develop appealing narratives about economic empowerment, while at the same time, presenting new scenarios about how to handle life’s challenges (techniques and knowledge). By the adoption of the director’s role, area leaders also deliberatively will appeal to residents to change their usual roles from inert, dependent individuals, to assume influence on the blocks’ development efforts.

The fourth and last legitimation strategy is directed to manage issues of authority. This strategy has been labeled as exemplifying. Since the area leaders’ authority is, to a large extent, based on their position as primus inter pares, their legitimacy strategies are aimed at emphasizing this special position in the community. One feature of this exemplifying strategy resides around normativity, which refers to an implicit, almost tacit connection area leaders make between their own development and the norms underlying the community development philosophy of Child Aid Doornkop. A second feature of the exemplifying strategy is self-confirmation of their special position in the community.

7.7. Statement of the findings of professional legitimation in Doornkop as a CMO-configuration

CONTEXT: Legitimation management by the Doornkop area leaders has to account for, and consequently derive its legitimating resources from, the weak tradition of civil society and local governance, as well as from the restrictive and comprehensive constraints of social policy. Furthermore, in processes of legitimation, the area leaders phrase the developmental needs of the local people as economic. Their professional status is linked to practices of the professionalization of local volunteers.

MECHANISM: In order to secure experiences of professional legitimacy, the area leaders apply different legitimation strategies. These strategies can be summarized as messaging, appreciating, directing, and exemplifying.

OUTCOME: These legitimation strategies produce experiences of professional legitimacy, characterized by the area leaders as acquisition, appropriation, coherence and authority.
Chapter 8. The generic aspects of professional legitimation in community development practice

8.1. Introduction

In the previous empirical chapters, professional legitimation in community development has been described in the specific local contexts of practice. First of all, the *contextual* dimension of professional legitimation was examined, leading to the identification of what community workers saw as crucial contextual constituents for their professional mandate. In the respective empirical chapters, the *operational* dimension of professional legitimation also was studied. Here the legitimation strategies of community workers appeared to be well-deliberated reactions to the pragmatic, moral and cognitive interests of the local community. In this chapter, the *generic* dimension of professional legitimation will be examined. Central here are the common features in the contextual and the operational aspects of professional legitimation. This comparison derives its basic notions from the Capabilities Approach (CA). Chapter 3 formulated professional legitimation in terms of *an outcome*, achieved when community workers possess *professional functionings*. This outcome refers to professionals being and doing things they find of value. Secondly, chapter 3 came to define and specify professional legitimation in terms of the *deliberative capabilities* required to determine legitimating resources in the local context. These deliberative capabilities are embedded in professional practice wisdom. Professional practice wisdom is the professional capability of community development workers to consciously relate actions to the pragmatic, moral and cognitive interests of the community.

8.2. The generic features of the contextual dimension of professional legitimation in terms of *professional functionings*

This study presented the constituents of professional legitimacy as they could be derived from specific features in the community workers’ professional experiences. Central is the inquiry into what community workers themselves saw as constitutive for their professional mandate. The multiple case study, and its consequent comparison, is based on the assumption that as a practice, community development work presents professionals with a number of common challenges. These challenges were initially defined as obtaining passive and active support, creating a sustainable professional relationship over time, and possessing professional credibility. Together, these aspects of professional legitimacy add up to “professional functionings,” or the opportunity of community workers to be and to stay professionally engaged with the local community. These opportunities for engagement are derived from specific characteristics of the environment in which the community workers operate. When examining these challenges, a number of common features emerge.
8.2.1. Passive support as inconspicuous but deliberate access

In general, community workers consider it as crucial to be able to introduce their professional intentions to the community as inconspicuously as possible in order to establish an initial sense of legitimacy. This seems most essential in emerging potential professional-community relationships. Being present in the everyday life situations of local people allows the community workers to seize eventual emerging opportunities to carefully frame concerns in terms of possible collective action. In this manner, their professional presence might be of interest without being too demanding by directly asking for concrete efforts from the local people.

A context where community workers are traditionally and officially appointed to work with local people can complicate, as well as facilitate, inconspicuous but deliberate access to local settings. After all, their external appointment can undermine a spontaneous professional-community relationship. Hence, their “license to operate” is not derived from the local community, but rather is based on agreements between the community development organization that staffs them and the local government that funds them. However, this mandate provides community workers with a formal basis for their presence in such established forms of community engagement as neighborhood committees. Here, community workers can draw on a sometimes politically contested, but nonetheless historically stable, presence in neighborhoods. Their professional mandate rests for a large part on local policy that sanctions community work as an essential instrument to stimulate and support active participation at the neighborhood level. It further traditionally distinguishes professional community work from the efforts of active volunteers. In well-developed welfare states, community workers can receive a formal education to enter the field. Moreover, the formalization of professional community work in arrangements between labor unions, professional expertise centers, and organizations of employers in the social services sector regularly emphasizes the professional character of community work. This historically groomed position enables community workers to spontaneously initiate local contacts in less formal settings, on the street, in the parks, and on the playgrounds. It is a historically developed professional prerogative.

A second form of passive support in terms of inconspicuous but deliberate access, is linked to the ability of community workers to derive initial legitimacy from predominantly informal settings. In comparison with the formalized position of community workers, here the occasions for initial contacts are not as pre-set or supported by a clear historical presence. Recognition must be earned in the moment. Possibilities to meet people at familiar, usual, obvious places are necessary, as well as a powerful message. An initial professional-community relationship only can be developed if people affected by the problems which the workers address, indeed recognize as relevant. A strong tradition of civil society activism predisposes this form of mobilizing community-based public activities. Rallies are familiar means to voice concerns; door-knocking activities are a familiar mode of mobilization. In this context, compelling social issues, as well as a willingness to create active groups and subsequent strategies to address them, is supportive. It is especially true if most of the local people suffer exclusion from crucial resources, such as social and political protection, there is ample basis for possible mobilization. An initial possibility for professional-community relationship rests here on recognition of the relevance of the issues that community workers raise by local people. However, there are contexts where either formal or informal access to local people and their concerns is less obvious. Here the challenge is to acquire willingness to consider eventual engagement. It is a matter of trial and error in a context where few references exist to successful local community, focused on concrete improvements in living conditions. It appears in a setting where a central community development or-
organization engages in locality development by reaching out to the surrounding areas. A mission of comprehensive community development has to be promoted. In such a context, community workers first have to realize a sense of acceptance for this mission in order to mobilize local people. They need to account for the dire living conditions that the local community has to face. Fortunately, they can do so, because they are familiar through experience with these conditions.

**8.2.2. Active support as emerging community responsibility**

In general, community workers consider it crucial for active support when they observe emerging community engagement. This is visible through increasing community activity and a process of expanding responsibility for the developmental process. Key features in this experience of emerging community activism, are signs of deepening expansion, as well as internal cohesion of the communities’ activities.

A first type of emerging community responsibility in this study is found in a *locally aligned form of engagement*. Here, community members start to be prepared to be active on behalf of local informal initiatives in the interest of the neighborhood. This is a sign of civic responsibility. For instance, it happens when local initiatives become integrated into the more established community structures, such as a community center or existing voluntary organizations. A similar civic responsibility becomes obvious as neighborhood committees open up for new members outside their traditional local “inner circle.” In short, a form of local coordination by various community initiatives emerges. This type of local engagement is especially relevant for community workers who have the task to implement new policy ambitions, such as to increase the contribution of volunteers to manage former public neighborhood services. This internal coordination is almost mandatory in all contexts where financial means are scarce and at the same time, there is a highly dense local fabric of community initiatives. Central here is that community workers experience a cooperative modus from the different local actors. More grass-roots emergence of community responsibility is found when *people affected by problems turn into local activists*. Here, the control over the development process also increasingly comes into the hands of the active community members. Usually, a more or less structural form already has been laid out, such as a local committee or a special interest action group. However, a deepening interest and knowledge about the structural sociopolitical roots of the problems of local people lies at the base of this transition of responsibility. This works well if at the same time, the targets for action can be clear and concise, such as a specific political agenda to be influenced, or a particular group of “adversaries” to address. Furthermore, in these settings, community workers feel that it is their task to transfer control as soon as possible. Goals to stimulate people to expand and deepen their involvement also have a solid tradition in political community work. This community work tradition aims to make active agents out of “victims” as soon as possible. Consequently, this transition of control becomes tangible in the expansion of local activist structures.

In a setting where community responsibility is framed in terms of individual responsibility, community workers define emerging community responsibility in terms of appropriation of the community development process. Just as was the case in the previously sketched contexts, the community also adopts notions of responsibility and engagement. Yet, here the active support reveals itself in the willingness of individuals to take responsibility for their own lives. However, this appropriation of the developmental strategy is easily discernible in a setting where small adjustments in life style can make a visible and profound difference. A home garden provides food on the table, but it also keeps snakes from the house. Concrete interests, needs and experiences are the
basis for participation, but the direction of the local engagement is already determined. This appropriation emerges in situations with few competing local community organizations and a lack of governmental interest. It further grows in a setting where the mission of the community workers is congruent with official social policy. Active support in terms of appropriation expands the possibilities of community workers to broaden the scope of themes that could be integrated into their work with the residents.

8.2.3. Continuity as long-term, and structural involvement

In general, community workers seek opportunities for structural integration of their involvement in the fabric of formal and informal local initiatives. Forms of co-production are fostered between local community initiatives and more structural partnerships, whether or not in accord with long-term policy objectives. Being able to create a stable local environment is crucial, as is predictable behavior of local actors other than the community itself. However, the predominance of the professional involvement is not as explicitly claimed everywhere else.

The most striking example of professional prominence as almost conditional for sustainable local livability is found in a setting with a high degree of local conflicting activities and interests. Here, community workers essentially consider their structural involvement as a matter of offering stability and exerting control. This seems indispensable if there is a high frequency of informal interactions between active local individuals, local officials and local politicians. It creates a volatile local dynamic, which challenges community workers to develop a long-term community development strategy. In this setting, community workers derive their sense of continuity from a sense of entitlement based on the historically engrained exclusive presence of community workers at the community level.

In a more politicizing professional practice, community workers can more easily embed existing local actions into a long-term agenda of structural social and political empowerment, unbounded by a formal mandate. A vibrant tradition of civil society activism provides both the expertise and the supra-local networks of special interest coalitions. Furthermore, ample opportunities to keep local people engaged are found in governmental restraints in social, economic and environmental issues. Under the condition that the state is rather obsolete, community activism can grow. The extensive network of local, regional and national media can be especially powerful as allies. This is certainly true, since they can name politicians who have an interest in recognizing the needs of their local political constituency as a matter of course. This tradition of political activism as a tool for social reform fosters persistent community activism. Here community development workers operate as political reformers.

Coherence in time, place, relevance and direction of local activities is a third type of constituent for continuous professional-community involvement. This need for coherence refers to two dimensions of professional community work. First of all, it requires a sense of predictability in the community development process with community workers assuming the needs of local residents. In this setting, most basic living conditions are precarious. The present can be demanding enough, as the regular occurrence of disrupting life events can distract the energy necessary to focus on the future. The second dimension of the need for coherence is linked to the clarity of the mission of the community development organization with which the workers are affiliated. It seems essential that the long-term objectives for community development account for the most concrete issues in the daily lives of people.
8.2.4. Credibility as professional appeal

In general, community workers’ experiences of credibility show a firm association with professional appeal. This professional appeal is based on the personal characteristics of community workers but converted into characteristics that are professional relevant. Hence, much of the work rests on the ability to build personal relationships. Moreover, while most of the community workers operate individually, they often face assembled local people. In situations such as these, they have to assess their credibility about the way in which they possess professional appeal. However, while community workers tend to emphasize a personal nature of credibility, it reflects the professionalism. Hence, in one setting, do workers emphasize the necessity of being recognized for their expertise in community affairs. In the second setting studied, the opposite was the case, and community workers seemed to base their appeal on common backgrounds and experiences. In the third setting studied, community workers considered authority to be a combination of professional expertise and commonality in background, making it possible to establish their professional credibility. However, in general, community workers were aware of an obvious professional-community divide. In all three settings, emphasizing the public character of their engagement eventually reflects back on their person. The personal character of this public appeal is relatively explicit and present in the settings where professionals look for recognition of their expertise. This expertise is personalized (“something I possess”), but at the same time it also refers to the professional dimension of their capacities in community relations where they have to demonstrate strength, overview and specific knowledge. In a context where this recognition of expertise is relevant, community workers already have the traditionally privileged position, of a liaison officer. Sometimes, much to the dismay of officials, community workers were seen as ever present and even representing the interests of the community. In fact, they almost exclusively possessed the knowledge about actual community issues. Furthermore, they tended to have easy access to the local community networks; and moreover, they mediated between the more formalized practices of both neighborhood and local governance. This all provided them with a considerable span of control and hence a large professional responsibility. Not surprisingly, these community workers tended to associate credibility with the professional appeal of their position and the ability to connect the local issues with existing political agendas. In this sense, professional appeal is closely linked to the previously discussed concern about a secured mandate over time in a structured, stable local environment. A second form of references to the balance between the professional and the personal dimension of professional credibility revolved around commonality. This encompasses similarities in the backgrounds of the community workers and the local community members. Professional credibility in this context is related to the personal identification of the community workers with the issues the local people suffer from. This is based on sharing the same city of birth, common experiences, and even the same ethnic background. However, commonality is not enough for credibility. Nevertheless, this commonality certainly does inform the community workers and give them a degree of professional appeal. First of all, commonality is an asset in a context where community workers are not appointed by a formal institution, but have to build credibility in an atmosphere of informality. In a context where social issues often are politicized in terms of class and ethnic background, similarities also entitle the community workers to publicly make appeals for social action.

In another setting, commonality on the basis of ethnic or local background works in a different way. Here, authority supports the professional-community relationship. Under such circumstances, professional appeal as a community worker also is linked to similarity in local backgrounds, based on
distinctiveness related to advances in education and personal development. The community workers in this context initially worked as volunteers, after being schooled in fields, such as care and health counseling. But although they share the same city of birth, they do not work in the same neighborhood where they live. Their local descent however predisposes them to be and remain seen as individuals who were able to develop themselves. Yet, in the eyes of the local residents, they are not really professionals. Still, community workers relate their credibility to professional qualities, such as effectiveness and expertise, which should provide them some aura of authority.

In this section, the generic aspects of professional legitimation have been examined in terms of professional functionings. These functionings refer to what the community workers see as enabling them to be and stay professionally engaged with local communities in general. A first generic functioning has been identified as having access to such local contexts where community workers can be inconspicuously, yet purposefully, present at the same time. On spontaneous, yet deliberately chosen occasions, community workers are able to phrase urgent issues into a developmental agenda. This supports a possible professional-community relationship. When community participation further expands consecutively in dynamic, size and engagement, community workers experience a more robust mandate. However, this is conditional, since it requires further collective action in line with a specific local development agenda, based on what in that context are existing professional principles. As such, active support is linked to emerging community responsibility that accounts for what the community workers see as just strategies and suitable targets. After all, over time, this professional-community engagement has to be further rooted. This structural and longitudinal professional functioning is found in local initiatives that are embedded in a predictable environment, for instance, by linking it to either long-term local ambitions or policy objectives. Amidst this, community workers are sensitive to possibilities to personally embody the professional character of their engagement.

8.3. The generic features of the operational dimension of professional legitimation in terms of deliberative capabilities

So far, this chapter has examined general aspects of community workers’ mandates. Access to community settings to deliberately stimulate a sense of interest in local engagement is crucial. Furthermore, the professional mandate requires community responsibility, albeit within stable local networks or policy-informed constraints. Community workers’ credibility rests on their ability to individually embody the public nature of community engagement. This section focuses on what is generic in the strategies of community workers to obtain professional legitimacy.

In the three case studies, this operational dimension of professional legitimation in community development was examined by analyzing time-based reflections of community workers. These deliberative activities revealed the contextual legitimizing resources. In other words, what was studied, was how community workers related their professional aims to the interests of the local community. This ability to relate professional ambitions to the interests of the environment was labeled in chapter 3 as a legitimating capability. It is a capability, since it includes the possibilities the professional has to obtain a professional mandate at the local level. The generic aspects of these legitimating capabilities will be examined in the next sections.

8.3.1. The fusing capability to obtain inconspicuous but deliberate presence

For community workers in the three contexts studied, the experience of initial support is associated with the ability to be present inconspicuously, yet deliberately, in settings where local people
can be found. The question is now, what general capabilities do community organizers possess in order to obtain recognition for professional presence. In all three contexts, a focus on the local morals appeared to be obvious. Possible cooperation can be fostered by adapting to local ways of living, to local interests, and to local values. This ability to adapt draws on the *phronesis*, or practice wisdom, of the community worker. This reflective capability explores the opportunities in the local setting to blend in with the community workers’ professional mission. This capability that community workers apply can best be understood metaphorically as a process of *fusing*. This refers to a chemical process establishing a new element by blending or melting two elements. In a related manner, community workers fuse their intentions to develop a professional relationship with what in the local context is considered to be relevant and worthwhile. What must be produced is a new, but shared, symbolic universe. A new form of community engagement can be stimulated; it is one that expands or even replaces how local communities have dealt so far with the issues in personal and community life. Yet, this possible professional-community engagement has to remain recognizable as intrinsically part of local life. Mutual consent is essential here. In all three contexts, community workers account for this capability to fuse their professional intentions. *Tapping-in, nurturing* and *messaging* are all strategies that express the active endeavors of professionals to recognize the prerogatives of the communities’ practices. For instance, *tapping-in* refers to a number of legitimizing techniques that community workers apply to establish a professional involvement as closely as possible in line with the needs and interests of local people. The professionals fuse in to what the community sees as valuable goals and behaviors. This strategy of tapping-in is characterized by an almost unilateral effort of community workers to become accepted. In a context where community work is an institutionalized part of official community development, the professional presence is almost mandatory. As one element, that mandatory character must be turned into a supportive presence that local people recognize as of local value. Here, the stable, but externally derived, mandate fuses with potential local engagement.

Similarly, community workers demonstrate the fusing capability in the *nurturing* strategy. In these settings, the goal also is to obtain recognition for professional community engagement. Yet, no mandatory presence at the local level has to be accounted for in this strategy. Here, community workers are predominantly local. Consequently, they only have to account for a profound interest in becoming a supportive element in visible, challenging life situations of local people. The key for professional-community collaboration here is to *work with what is already present in the local context*. Places for emerging engagement, as well as these existing situations, are familiar to both professionals and community members. For instance, the schools, the parks, and the streets are familiar to professionals and the local community. The techniques for mobilization, such as public gatherings, also are familiar to the local residents. However, at the same time, these places have to be converted into sites for community actions; and the techniques of community mobilization have to be directed towards concrete, actual issues. Community workers fusing capabilities blend their professional ambition with the concrete needs of local people to improve their housing, their social, economic or educational status. A form of fusing capability where the professional element is more prominent, is found in the messaging strategy. Here, the intention of community workers is to educate the local people about the necessity to become engaged. The mobilizing effort draws on their advances in education. At the same time, they also make use of their similarities in local and ethnic backgrounds. As such, they can easily refer to the concrete, daily concerns as a basis for a possible professional-community relationship. What clearly distinguishes the messaging strategy from the tapping-in and

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of the nurturing strategies is the use of external moral considerations as grounds for community engagement. A message of improving one’s life here is linked to notions about self-sufficiency, which the community has to recognize as relevant. What is fused here are moral developmental notions, concrete improvements and professional role model-ship.

8.3.2. The capability of diligent response to obtain community responsibility

Emerging community responsibility was a second key feature of community workers’ professional mandate. Increasing the breadth and depth of community “ownership” affirms their professional legitimacy, as the local residents apparently come to recognize the value of professional-community cooperation. Emerging community responsibility was evaluated differently in the contexts studied, in accordance with the specific ambitions of the professionals. Although responsibility differed, nevertheless in all cases, the challenge presented itself as how to obtain this crucial aspect of their professional mandate. After all, in general, community workers are present and of use in local settings where the adoption of collective responsibility is not obvious, but has to be developed. Therefore, the question is what generic capability can be discerned as crucial to obtain this situation of emerging community responsibility. Comparing the strategies examined in the three contexts, what arises as a common feature is that of diligent response. In order for community workers to strengthen the support for professional-community cooperation, it is crucial that they actively “embrace,” and appropriately respond to, emerging local initiatives. This study revealed three different strategies of this type of diligent response: installing, yielding and appreciating. All three entail a dedicated, firm, and yet responsive approach. It recognizes the efforts of community members to adopt responsibility through cooperation, as well as the expansion of their concerns, activities and knowledge. Resources relevant for this diligent response have been found by reiterating the value of local engagement, for instance, in terms of direct benefits. Furthermore, community workers increasingly grant local people greater influence in the development process. Moreover, community workers also adaptively feed the local people with knowledge and facilities in order to support them in their expanding local activities. This needs to be supported by rewarding the active local people either materially or emotionally. Community workers have to show sensitivity to the evolving needs of individuals to expand their horizon, and responsively offer them support in the form of small funds and facilities. A first strategy where this diligent response was being observed in was installing. Here, criteria to deliberate about and respond to local engagement bear notions of formalization and connection with existing community resources and local policy. The community workers necessarily have to draw upon their capability to frame emerging and existing local engagement into the more elusive, yet committed, direction of a local community development project. At the same time, it is crucial that community members keep on experiencing their activities as their own. In such a setting, diligent response means a subtle, but simultaneously convincing, moral and pragmatic appeal to the importance of civic responsibility as a public virtue.

In the other settings studied, community workers can count more easily on the direct emotional and social benefits for people who often tend to suffer individually. Part of diligent response here also includes the ability to facilitate a process in which people start to share stories and recognize mutual concerns. Just as important, is the people’s knowledgeability about the roots of, and also possible solutions for, their problems. Diligent response works here by adaptively supporting people with relevant knowledge that deepens understanding and broadens their perspective on life. Some of this knowledge tends to elaborate the systemic aspects of people’s problems, and consequently, it
can further support collective action. In settings where community workers share local, social, and ethnic backgrounds, diligent response works as a form of peer-education. Tacitly, the efforts of local people to take initiative are related to the positive evaluation of workers’ own experiences and development. By yielding, community workers iterate the direct gains of collective action. Through appreciation, the locals’ adoption by of new practices is being reinforced by emphasizing the moral virtue of taking responsibility over one’s life.

8.3.3. The capability of settling to obtain long-term structural engagement

A third common concern for professional legitimacy has been identified as long-term engagement, and at the same time structural involvement. Community workers consider this to be crucial in order to structurally embed their professional activities. This structural embedding has different features, including new local narratives about collective and individual development, links between local actions with policy objectives, and local, but also regional, forms of structural cooperation. This study identified regulating, arranging and directing as strategies to obtain this structural integration of the communities’ activities. What these strategies share is the ability to identify both structural omissions for the communities’ well-being and a focus on crucial future community resources. Here, a proactive and prudent sensibility seemed to be required for settling these new local targets in a long-term developmental perspective. In other words, this settling capability rests on the community workers’ awareness of which suitable future targets would be able to establish a long-term professional–community relationship. Hereby, sensitivity for local cooperative forces, as well as possible and existing local animosities, is crucial. Furthermore, accomplishments and successful experiences have to be acknowledged. Technically, this settling capability requires a skillful mix of converting the pragmatic interests, moral sentiments and cognitive needs at the local level into a long-term professional–community relationship.

Here, new targets, new knowledge and new inspiration usually are being provided for local community members or groups who want to develop sustainable local initiatives. Yet, this requires a common sense of direction. An attractive narrative could express directions of local change and the role of the residents in that process of change. At the same time, community workers develop scenarios where each role and responsibility is being formulated. Narratives and scenarios make co-creators out of negative experiences in marginalized communities.

Community workers who apply a regulating strategy demonstrate the settling capability by almost literally settling at the community level. They position as close as possible to the places where community members meet and interact. From there, the workers observe, intervene and stabilize eventual conflicting interests. It is the historical prerogative of community workers who can draw on an institutional mandate to work in communities.

Community workers also demonstrate the settling capability in the arranging strategy. Here professionals first settle all structural local engagement by thematically linking local experiences to wider social issues. For instance, racial profiling by the local police is connected with racism in society. At the same time, community workers settle by establishing structural cooperation between the community and local and regional actors. A relatively dense structure of local and civil society organizations provides ample opportunities to build structural thematic coalitions that feed local activities with knowledge and access to financial resources. In the third context studied, the settling capability of community workers was revealed by directing strategy in multiple ways. Directing entails the appropriation of a supervisory position. With few supportive organizations in the environment, profes-
sionals have to actively manage and delegate community development efforts. This directing strategy provides the community members with appealing stories and active roles at the community level.

8.3.4. The staging capability to obtain professional appeal

In this study, the generic feature of credibility has been conceptualized in terms of public appeal. When studying the different legitimation strategies required to obtain this appeal, a common aspect emerges, best described as a form of staging capability, which accounts for the strong performative nature of obtaining professional appeal. First, it entails using personal characteristics as professionally relevant assets for community engagement. In this manner, the personhood of the professional becomes a normative frame of reference. The life experiences of community workers, including their actual behavior, start to become a model, or an example, for how community members should or could behave. In the first variant, the professionals set the moral norms. In the second, the professionals integrate the experiences of local people with their own. In the third variant, aspects of both the normative and the integrative are apparent.

This normative variant of staging becomes visible in the modeling strategy. Here, community workers obtain credibility by a deliberate display of ideal forms of civic engagement. In this setting, professional credibility rests on embodying specific notions about how, ideally, constructive interactions between people at the neighborhood level should take place. As a result, their behavior demonstrates principally inclusive actions, solving conflicts through diplomacy, and sanctioning social behavior that is, in their view, contributive to a livable social environment. This normative form of staging converts general public values of civil engagement into a normative model for community interactions. At least partially, the professionals’ credibility is obtained through that ability to stage these ideal forms of civic behavior.

Community workers also can apply staging in a more inviting way. For instance, this is true when they put their personal similarities with the community more in the forefront. This is seen as part of the integrating strategy in a setting where community workers share the same ethnic and/or local background with the community. Here, creating a credible professional position requires the ability to link experiences, life stories and values of the community workers with those of the local people. What makes the position of the community workers especially distinct, is their ability to explicitly align both worlds, so that the professional boundaries are crossed to build a more personal bond.

A third example of staging can be seen in the exemplifying strategy that community workers utilize to share their same local background and daily living circumstances with the residents with whom they work. The focus here is not on the common experiences or on the universal dimension of social suffering, but instead on a specific cultural model of community agency. The community workers in this setting obtain their professional credibility from their ability to function as an example of what the community could achieve. This cultural model is the basis for an official policy model that promotes individual responsibility, economic self-sufficiency, and education as a pathway to equal social opportunities. As a matter of fact, it is exactly the exemplifying role of this cultural model in general that is seen as a crucial vehicle to further implement this official development strategy.

In this section, the generic operational aspects of professional legitimation have been examined in terms of legitimating capabilities. These capabilities are assumed to be contributive to create
the conditions for professional community development practice at the neighborhood level. A first generic capability referred to as *fusing*, is the ability to blend professional stakes with local interests, so that a professional-community engagement can be initiated with mutual consent. Through diligent response, community workers display an adaptive ability to galvanize emerging community engagement with cognitive, material and emotional incentives. In order to secure professional engagement over time, the capability to settle a structural, locally embedded community development process seems to be generic in all contexts. Community responsibility can become structural through settling. This capability expresses the professionals’ skill to increase the span of control of active local people, formulate new local developmental challenges, and firmly root them in existing local and regional networks. The fourth and final generic capability has been labeled as *staging*. This legitimating ability supports the professional credibility of community workers in terms of favorable personal characteristics. The personal backgrounds, experiences, features, skills and qualities become a stake in the bonding between the professional and the community. This can either work as a competence to obtain professional appeal by assuming a role model position or as a more integrative competence to derive professional appeal on the basis of commonalities, instead of distinctions.

**8.4. Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the generic dimension of professional legitimation in community development based on three case studies. The review is derived by examining the contextual and the operational dimensions of legitimation in terms of common features across the professional community development practices studied. The Capabilities Approach was drawn upon as a conceptual framework, more particularly, the concepts of *functionings* and *capabilities*. Functionings depicted common themes in the contextual conditions community workers linked to experiences of professional legitimacy. On the other hand, capabilities, depicted common themes in the legitimizing abilities of community workers across the three contexts studied. This examination grounds the formulation of some generic features in professional legitimation in community development.

1. Community development professionals obtain professional legitimacy in terms of inconspicuous but deliberate access, if they have the ability to *fuse* their professional intentions with actual experiences at the local level into a shared community development effort.

2. Community development professionals obtain professional legitimacy in terms of emerging community responsibility, if they are diligently responsive to the needs of local people for education, material, and moral support.

3. Community development professionals obtain legitimacy in terms of long-term structural cooperation with the community, if they are able to *settle* local activities. This requires formulating new developmental challenges, structuring ongoing activities, and linking these activities to local and regional networks, as well as to more long-term policy objectives.

4. Community development professionals obtain professional appeal by personal experiences and skills as either a model for community engagement or as a basis to connect to the experiences of community members.
Chapter 9. Discussion and conclusion

9.1. Introduction

The current chapter is set up to critically discuss and evaluate this study and its contribution to the existing body of knowledge with regard to professional legitimation in community development. First of all, the research into legitimation practices in Bos en Lommer, Chelsea, and Doornkop will be critically reviewed by reflecting on the methodological, conceptual and analytical choices in this study. This critical review prepares for a link to the findings, to the original assumptions, and to future research. In addition, the relevance of the findings for the education of community development professionals and professionalization practices in the field will be addressed shortly. The aim of this study was to develop insight into the legitimation practices of community development professionals. More precisely, it had the intention of illuminating how these professionals are able to secure their mandate to be involved professionally with the local community over time. This study was formulated as a response to a very specific scholarly debate in the recent community development literature about the professional legitimacy of the field. Chapter 2 reviewed this recent literature, and identified an almost unilateral focus on the institutional legitimacy of the field. Characteristic for this focus is a reiteration of the historical, political and ideological reformist origins of community development practice. The current social political climate of neo-liberalism and new public management as constraints for many community development practices was consequently being scrutinized as antithetical to these reformist roots. This study presents a focus on professional legitimacy as first of all contextual, secondly as a part of professional agency, and thirdly as possibly reflecting some generic, universal features that could be related to community development professionals embodying certain practice. The first dimension entailed a focus on the contextual constraints that could provide the constituents for the legitimacy of community workers’ presence at the community level. This meant a shift from the dominant focus in the literature on the institutional legitimacy of community development towards the strategic legitimacy of the professional in interaction with local community people. This brought aspects of strategic legitimacy into play, including professional legitimacy based on the perceptions, experiences and evaluations of community workers in practice. Professional legitimation was seen as a strategic prerequisite for community work even to be possible. This shift was based on the assumption that local contexts produce specific challenges for community development professionals to overcome in order to constitute their professional mandate. The second dimension presented a focus on the operational aspects of professional legitimation in community work. This focus entailed a shift from the outsiders’ perspective of academic scholars to the insiders’ perspective of the professionals as active designers of their own mandate. Part of this was a shift from the tendency in the community development field to study legitimacy as an historical prerogative to be defended, towards the study of legitimacy as an asset for professional practice, one that is being actively produced by the professionals. This production, or management, of professional legitimacy is located in the ability of professionals to deliberate about practice. Secondly, it was studied as an ability to tune into and to convert interests of the local community into legitimating resources. Thirdly, professional legitimation was studied as discursive accountability, or as the ability of professionals to use language to explicitly link their interests to those of the community.

This third dimension in the study of professional legitimation in community work refers to the generic aspects of professional legitimation in community work. The assumption is that by comparison of cases, common features in constituents and strategies of legitimation might emerge. These
common features could represent something of the professional dimension of legitimation in community work. Here the Capabilities Approach functioned as a logic supporting the detection and consequent structuring of common features.

9.2. Discussion of methodological choices

This study had three goals. First of all, it aimed to study the contextual dimension of professional legitimation in community development practice. This entailed the identification of the constituents of professional legitimacy, as embedded in specific contexts of practice. Secondly, this study focused on the operational dimension of professional legitimation. This approach has considered community workers as active agents of their professional mandate in relation to the local communities. Thirdly, this study aimed at discerning possible generic features of professional legitimation in community development. This goal was based on the premise that case studies in completely different settings of practice might yield such generic themes of issues. In what follows, the study will be evaluated as to whether it was able to realize these initial goals.

9.2.1 The contextual nature of legitimation

The study of the contextual dimension of professional legitimation in community development was designed as a multiple case study with a maximum variety of contexts. The assumption here was that studying professional legitimation in highly different contexts would yield specific themes, challenges and clues for community workers to establish their mandate as professionals in the community. The logic behind this multiple case study was that particular institutional contexts produce specific context-related features of legitimacy. The selection of the case studies was based on contextual characteristics, such as traditions of civil society and governance, social policy constraints, local development issues, and professionalization practices. It was thought that while being embedded in their daily practices, community workers would reveal how these contextual constraints foster or limit their professional mandate. This assumption that observations, interviews, and focus group meetings would provide empirical material to address the relationship between context and issues of legitimacy proved to be successful, but also has its limitations. It is successful because the data provided ample material to discern the contextual and operational aspects in the daily efforts of community workers to obtain a mandate at the community level. The initial stages of the field research knew some limitations as the issue of professional legitimacy appeared not to be a matter of great concern for the community workers. Reflection on this strategic dimension of practice even seemed non-existent. The general sentiment in all three contexts was that community workers place the community before anything else; as a consequence the workers themselves tended to minimize the impact of their own efforts. As a result, the development of rapport with regard to issues of legitimacy - central in this study - was at first sight not obvious. This challenged the data collection phase, and subsequently the data analysis. Direct references to legitimacy as part of their daily encounters were hard to distinguish at first. The assumption that professionals are spontaneously inclined to reflect on practical challenges to their relationships with the community, at first, appeared to be incorrect.

However, the adoption of an alternative approach to address issues of professional legitimacy eventually produced the necessary reflections. The notion of phronesis, derived from the social inquiry approach of Flyvbjerg (2001), came to the rescue. It provided the data collection with sensitiz-
ing concepts that referred to the moral dimension of professional practice. Examining the assessments of community workers about their relationship to the direct environment became the focus, not the somewhat abstract keywords from legitimacy theory. Flyvbjerg’s stand, supported by a large body of research, brought the question of legitimacy in everyday community development within reach. The focus on professional reasoning (Flyvbjerg, 2001) opened the way to investigate legitimacy as a phenomenon that reveals itself in spontaneous reflections of professionals on problematic incidents. Rephrasing made it possible to inquire legitimacy concerns in terms of three leading questions: “What does one want to accomplish?”, “Is it worthwhile to pursue these goals?”, and “What consequently has to be done?“

In Bos and Lommer, this rephrasing worked in interviews, but also in the focus group meetings. The professionals received assignments to present problematic cases and let their colleagues reflect on them. In Chelsea, participating in an ongoing research project about the legitimacy of their involvement in local and regional coalitions revealed dilemmas with regard to personal goals, their assessment of those goals and the required actions. In Doornkop, the focus on the daily challenges of area leaders to realize their ambitions proved to be a fertile ground to elicit reflections about their experiences of legitimacy. In these reflections, what community workers see as constitutive for their ability to become and stay professionally engaged with local people appeared to be filled with references to their direct professional context. As a result, the contextual dimension of legitimation could be documented by making inferences from the interpretation of the reflections as if they were discussing legitimacy. These initial interpretations were validated and, where necessary, corrected by way of focus group meetings in Bos en Lommer and Doornkop, and expert interviews supportive to further refine and validate the local themes of legitimacy.

A second, more thorough analysis consequently was aimed to distil building blocks of professional legitimacy out of the local themes. This was based on references to the specific challenges community workers face in their daily interactions with the local people. These so called constituents of legitimacy, eventually appeared to be clearly associated with the specific contextual conditions that community workers had to acknowledge in their work. What these contextually coloured constituents demonstrate is that community workers appear to show awareness of the local contexts as constitutive for their professional mandate. The respective constituents of professional legitimacy in Bos en Lommer, Chelsea, and Doornkop, indeed reflect the contextual varieties of social policy, local civil society structures and local governance, as well as their own status as a professional, and the local development themes.

9.2.2. The operational dimension of professional legitimation

A second perspective this study adopted, was the operational dimension of professional legitimation in community development. This dimension referred to the active solicitude of the community development professionals in obtaining their professional mandate. Moreover, this operational dimension of professional legitimation was considered as the central mechanism to obtain professional legitimacy. The question here was, “What strategies and techniques do the community workers apply in response to challenges of their professional legitimacy?” These strategies were considered as forms of “legitimacy management.” Conceptually, this management of legitimacy was studied as a process whereby the community workers first of all deliberated on what efforts were required to fit into the environment of the local community; secondly, the development of strategies
aimed at converting the values of their environment, so that they fit with the values of the professional; and thirdly “discursive accountability” as an explicit calibration between the values of the environment with the intentions and values of the professional. As part of the case study, the examination of the operational dimension was labelled as a study of “embedded units.” It required a focus on specific incidents occurring during the case study. The intention here was to inquire how community workers applied the technique of discursive accountability. This “operational” dimension of professional legitimation would hence be made knowledgeable by focusing on their display of discursive accountability as the means by which they were able to create a framework that bridged their own intentions with what the local people would find valuable. Yet, the limited time frame of the case studies presented a challenge to follow up on how discursive accountability was used over time. After all, the goal was to study how community workers responded to specific incidents that required either creation, sustaintment, defense or restoration of their professional legitimacy. The necessary empirical material required to study this operational dimension risked becoming inaccessible.

In order to secure the focus on this operational dimension of legitimation of the study, an alternative strategy of data collection was adopted, based on the theoretical relationship between value conversion, deliberation about how to bridge the professionals’ values with the values of the local people, and the actual communication to convince the community about this relationship. This led to a shift of the focus from discursive accountability to the processes of deliberation about how they bridged the relationship between their own interests, values and cognitions, and those of the community. The questions during interviews and focus group meetings were staged in such a way that the professionals were invited to reflect on challenges of legitimacy as they occurred over time.

The initial expectation was that in the reflections, or deliberations, about the strategies for legitimation, references to legitimating resources would become visible. This expectation appeared to be realistic. The examination of the strategies for legitimation was able to identify how community workers obtain professional legitimacy by making appeals to the pragmatic, moral and cognitive interests of the local people. Moreover, the types of appeals to the interests of the community - labelled in this study as techniques - even show that they are linked to the specific constituents of professional legitimacy. In other words, in each of the studied contexts, specific strategies could be reconstructed on the basis of the references to either one local legitimating resource or a combination of several. Finally, across the contexts, a variety of legitimation strategies could be reconstructed, each embodying the specific efforts of community workers to stay as close as possible to the interests of local people.

9.2.3. The generic dimension of professional legitimation in community development

The focus on the generic dimension of professional legitimation referred to the possibility that the community workers in the three studied contexts might share some common features about what they considered to be constitutive for their mandate. The examination of this generic dimension, outlined in chapter 8, rested on two assumptions. Firstly, there was the assumption that community workers share a tribute to the social transformational mission of community development. This would predispose them to a common professional agenda, based on a strategy of stimulating community members to develop control over the issues that negatively affect their lives. Inherently linked to this agenda, is a professional restraint in assuming a prominent role in processes of increasing agency. Community workers have to consider their role as supportive, not as a stakeholder. The latter is linked to the second assumption, rooted in the central thesis in professionalization theory.
This assumption states that one of the characteristics of professions is the existence of a general, abstract, esoteric body of knowledge (Freidson, 2001). This generic body of knowledge should, as a consequence, emerge in the professional deliberations of the community workers in all three studied contexts. It is transferred by education, but more specifically also by socialization into professional practice as tacit and technical knowledge. Consequently, by adopting a comparative perspective on the contextual and operational dimension of professional legitimation in community work, this common knowledge could be derived as a shared frame of reference.

One of the challenges to depicting the generic features of this comparison was the considerable variety of professional backgrounds and education among the community workers, both in and between the studied contexts. This variety appeared to be an almost generic characteristic for community work in itself. But it also limited the transferability of the findings. After all, in order to generalize across the contexts, the sources that could negatively impact the comparison should have been identified during the formulation of the research design. One of such unexpected issues was that in all three contexts the formal education in social work, community development or macro social work was not a requirement. As a consequence, the identification of common features based on the assumption of a common body of knowledge would become difficult. Furthermore, another complication arose in the middle of the research process. This was linked to the assessment that some of the issues of legitimacy confronting community workers were associated with these practitioners′ possible relationships with more formal entities, such as local politicians, funders, other NGO’s, etc. A closer inspection revealed a variety of stakeholders, to whom community workers felt an obligation to legitimize their action. Such differences in backgrounds and relations with stakeholders existed even regionally, so that generalizations based on specific national or just regional features was impossible.

This unforeseen variety in professional education and stakeholders’ relations, both in and between the contexts, at first seemed to threaten to contaminate the findings, since a common base for comparison was weakened. In order to tackle this problem of transferability, the initial adoption of the Capabilities Approach as a general framework appeared to be of great value. The problem of the conceptual under-specification and the abstractness of CA’s developmental logic even became an asset to the comparative perspective. The first decision was to focus exclusively on professional-community relations. The variety in professional education and professional relationships was used as a possible contextual aspect, affecting the constituents and strategies of professional legitimation. The second decision was not to develop the generalizations with respect to the specific local, contextual features. Here the literature on qualitative comparison of dissimilar cases (Skocpol & Somers, 1980), further by Ragin (1987) and advocated for by Becker (1998), offered the possibility of logical induction. The strength of logical induction is that it provides both a strategy for generalization, as well as an acknowledgement of the provisional nature of generalizations. The form of logical induction applied was that of analogical inference. This approach of logical induction, also called case-based reasoning, compares cases on the basis of shared properties. The inferences of commonalities are based on the detection of shared features in professional legitimation in the three cases. Surprisingly, the respective cases not only shared features, but also revealed varieties on these features. The logic of inference provided by the Capabilities Approach, apparently supported both the detection of commonalities, as well as evidence of contextual differences. But still, the limits of such inductive approaches warns about over-generalization of the inference. The generic features are rooted in a comparison of professional legitimation as observed in specific, non-generable contexts. Nevertheless, since they were detected in three such different contexts, these generic features at least highlight some commonalities in the legitimation of community development work.
9.3. Conclusion

As a conclusion will in the next paragraphs the significance of this study be formulated. First of all, will the significance be phrased in terms of the relationship between the aim of the study and the results. Secondly, some remarks will be made about the significance of the insights from this study for educating community workers. Thirdly, the contribution of the Capabilities Approach as an analytic instrument to depict generic aspects in professional legitimation will be formulated.

9.3.1. The contextual nature of legitimacy

In this study, the examination of the contextual dimension of legitimation refers to the constitutive aspects in the contexts of practice for the professional mandate of the community development professionals. The results yield locally colored associations with initial and more engaged forms of support. Furthermore, persistence and credibility emerged in different varieties as relevant aspects of their mandate.

These findings support the initial assumption of this study about the relevance of supportive and challenging features in the community workers’ immediate professional environment. Stated differently, the community worker does not appear to merely be confronted with disempowering circumstances. What the different case studies show is the unpredictability in local dynamics as challenges. Another common feature is that the environment is not always cooperative from the start, and local people sometimes scrutinize the intentions of the community workers. However, in Bos en Lommer, in Chelsea and in Doornkop, the community workers’ accounts reflect, subtle, and sometimes indirect, experiences of support, recognition and persistence for their professional intentions. Contributive for the professional mandate of community workers are contextual assets such as professional education, professional status, supportive social policy systems and collaborative local partners. These contextual assets are structured for community workers in what can be phrased as legitimating ‘arrangements’, locally rooted combinations of constitutive aspects for professional legitimacy. Further research might eventually refine the community workers’ accounts of these experiences of legitimacy. For instance, an intriguing next step could be to structurally explore how the professionals consciously relate these experiences to specific contextual resources. It could lead to a weighing of the relative impact of, for instance, specific civil society activity on the local level, or specific features of local governance that contribute to a firm professional mandate. It could be worthwhile to assess how these professionals value their education as part of their legitimacy more directly, or to which degree their acknowledgement of the local needs amount to a stronger mandate.

9.3.2. The operational dimension of legitimation

This focus on the operational dimension of professional legitimation generated distinctive legitimation strategies, based on how community development professionals were able to build a common framework that merges the interests, values and knowledge of both the community workers and the local community. The results of the three case studies demonstrate the value of a focus on this conversion process as an entry point from which to study professional practices of legitimacy management. The reflective empirical material provided, first of all, ample insights about how com-
Community workers deliberate on available legitimizing resources, such as use, appropriateness and knowledge of the local community. Furthermore, the local varieties of legitimation strategies and techniques appear to be linked to the different characteristics of the professional context. These results support the assumption that community workers actively negotiate their mandate. Moreover, these results mark legitimation as an obvious aspect of professional community development practice. Finally, in all three cases studied, the versatility of the community workers to secure their mandate over time became apparent. For instance, this versatility was reflected in the variety of techniques to defend specific aspects (constituents) of their mandate found in the variety in references to legitimating resources. Further research might expand our knowledge about legitimacy management in community development practice by adopting a more longitudinal case study approach. A longer embedding in the daily community practices could provide more opportunities to observe the behaviour, such as the communication strategies as responses to challenges to their professional legitimacy.

9.3.3. The generic issues of professional legitimation in community development

The third goal of this study was to examine the possible generic features in professional legitimation in community development practices. The assumption that the detected generic features might refer to community development as a professional tradition, has been supported by the detection of analogies in the contextual and operational dimension of professional legitimation in the three contexts. These analogies in for instance access, community responsibility, structural embedding and professional appeal as crucial for a community workers’ mandate, point to the possibility of generic themes in the operational dimension of professional legitimation in community development. Similarly, a number of analogies in the legitimating capabilities could be detected, such as fusing, a skilful merging of professional stakes with the interests of the local community. Also other legitimating capabilities, such as diligent response, settling and staging are tentatively formulated as generic features in professional legitimation strategies in community work. A firmer basis for generalizing these common features of professional legitimation might be derived from further research. A comparative approach could be valuable, but now in other contexts of community workers, with other local features of civil society and governance, social policy systems, local needs and perhaps, more formally educated or formally mandated professionals. The common features, in terms of analogies found might even be further challenged and possibly refined by testing their occurrence in other practices. Finally, an entry to establish generic patterns of legitimation, by adopting a comparative approach, could be applied to study the differences and commonalities in professional legitimation in contexts where community workers, social case workers and other street-level professionals who do not possess an obvious mandate do tend to have legitimacy. However, despite their limited generality generability, these findings do support the initial assumption that contexts provide community workers with pragmatic, moral and cognitive resources to obtain professional legitimacy, certainly in their relations with the local community. Moreover, it also supports the assumption that community workers actively negotiate their mandate with local people. In all three contexts, community workers literally look for a communis opinio based on appeals to the pragmatic, moral and cognitive interests of the local people. As such, this study contributes to the understanding of how legitimacy for community development work is being obtained in local settings. The scholarly insights and strategies of the field to secure the legitimacy of community development as a social transformation practice, are
expanded with insights about the constituents and daily efforts of community workers to obtain professional legitimacy for their engagement with local communities as part of professional practice.

Also, the education of community workers in the Netherlands might profit from what this study revealed. More particularly, it is not always obvious part of community work training how to inconspicuously yet deliberately find access to informal settings, as a prerequisite for initial professional-community relationships. This is what usually is called the “orientation phas” in social work practice. This term seems to suggest that it is the student or the professional who orientates on the community. But this study reveals the subtle, complex, vulnerable and conditional, but above all the reciprocal nature of professional-community relationships. As such, these findings even might reassure the colleagues of the studied community workers in other professional contexts, that they in fact do possess legitimacy, even without being aware of it. After all, what this study also demonstrates is that legitimating capabilities such as fusing, diligent response, settling and staging are, however tacitly, intrinsically part of the professional body of skills. Furthermore, these skills are not just a generic, universal part of every professional’s competence. On the contrary, this study also demonstrates how community workers align these legitimating skills to the specific socio-political background of their practice and the professional tradition they embody. For instance, the ability to stage one’s professional credibility had in this study references to different notions about professionalism. In one setting, professional credibility was staged as a rooted in distinct professional qualities of modelling ideal forms of civic engagement In another setting, community workers stage their professional credibility by linking their experiences to the community’s experiences.

Finally, I will make a few remarks on the value of the Capabilities Approach for this and further study. From the start, the CA’s logic to depict the efforts of people to achieve “beings and doings” (Sen, 1999) a person has reason to value, worked as a valuable conceptual “emulator.” Notions such as capabilities became attached to concepts such as professional deliberation. The central concept of functionings gave depth to explore what community workers viewed as constitutive for their legitimacy to work with communities. The notion of capabilities stimulated the researcher to further open “the black box of professional wisdom.”

Consequently, this led to the discovery of the concept of discursive accountability (Romm, 2002) as the mechanism by which community workers transcend the possible differences in interests, values, and knowledge existing in the professional-community relationship. Finally, the importance of conversion factors to actively transform the interest, values and knowledge of the community into legitimating resources eventually completed the theoretical framework for this study. Its conceptual under-determination (Robeyns, 2005) was in this phase an asset to frame the relationship between contextual features, the mechanism of professional legitimation, and the outcome of professional legitimacy in terms of functionings.

However, in translating these notions into sensitizing concepts for the data analysis, this under-determination suddenly became a problem. It looked as if there were two conceptual frameworks in use. First of all, there was the general logic of the CA and its central notions; and secondly there were the sensitizing concepts used to code and structure the case study data, and to later report the findings of the respective case studies in chapter 5, 6 and 7. This initially led to a multilayered coding system, which frustrated the first attempts to clarify patterns in the concrete experiences and reflections of the community workers. As a consequence, it was crucial in the analytical and reporting phase to loosen the ties with the CA framework.

Yet, in the final stage of this study, the CA became relevant again, this time as a tool for the comparison in chapter 8. Its formal logic supported the search for analogies in the constituents of legitimacy and in the legitimation strategies found in the three case studies. Looking back, the ap-
pealing logic of the Capabilities Approach worked in this study as a conceptual tool, instead of as a conceptual framework. Perhaps these are the lessons to be learnt when one wants to draw on the CA for future research on professional practice. The CA can be crucial in depicting the relevance of the professional as it acknowledges the role of human capabilities and agency to actively obtain a legitimate position.

The CA as a conceptual framework can confuse the analysis of specific practices that need a more refined set of sensitizing concepts as an operational framework. But, finally, the CA can be a critical friend one can turn to in order to make sense of more general themes in a comparative study.
Bibliography


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Curriculum Vitae Jeroen Gradener

Jeroen Gradener (Antwerp, 1966) graduated in 1994 in cultural psychology at the Radboud University Nijmegen. After working as an organizer of public debates at a political-cultural center, he became consultant in social and cultural policy, with a focus on governance, diversity and local issues. He published a number of articles and public essays on cultural integration and political reform. In 2001, he started as a lecturer in social and community development at Avans University of Applied Sciences. Five years later, in 2006, he was appointed as senior lecturer in community development at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, where he was lead of the professional Master of Social Work and a research program on Community Development. Since 2011, he combined his lectureship with a PhD-project on professional legitimation in community development practices.
Appendices
Appendix 1. Procedure for literature review *Community Development Journal*

Step 1 July 15 2013 Website http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/

3. Coding system
   - Professional legitimacy
     - Legitimacy
     - Civil society and local governance
     - Social Policy
     - Local Development Issues
     - Professionalization
   - Strategies


Keyword “professionalisation” Jan 2008 – July 2013 - Retrieval articles

Selection articles based on relevance by reference to keywords “knowledge”, “professionalism”, “legitimacy”, “professional”, “expertise”, “education”, “practice”

Coding articles according to

- Knowledge
- Professionalism
- Legitimacy
- Professional
- Expertise education
- Practice
Appendix 2. Coding system

1. Code list first cycle
   Professional legitimacy
   Context
   • general features practice
   • civil society and local governance
   • social policy constraints
   • local development needs
   • professionalization

   Mechanism process concepts
   • Discursive accountability - actions
   • Deliberations situation - context
   • Conversion resources
      - Pragmatic
         - Exchange
         - Influence
         - Disposition
      - Moral
         - Techniques
         - Structure
         - Procedures
      - Cognitive
         - Knowledgeability
         - Taken for granted

   Outcome constituents
   • Passive support
   • Active support
   • Continuity
   • Credibility
2. Code list second cycle meta-categories

**fINPUT Fragments constituents** Bos en Lommer / Chelsea/ Doornkop

- Passive support
- Active support
- Continuity
- Credibility

ANALYZING fragments on conversion resources coding with

- Pragmatic
  - Exchange
  - Influence
  - Disposition

- Moral
  - Techniques
  - Structure
  - Procedures
  - Consequences

- Cognitive
  - Knowledgeability
  - Taken for granted

1. Code list third cycle comparison formalization meta-categories via inductive logic

**INPUT Context**

- Civil society and local governance
- Social policy constraints
- Local development needs
- Professionalization

ANALYZING Common themes in professional functionings via CA concept “functionings”

Constituents for professional legitimacy in Bos en Lommer/Chelsea/ Doornkop

- Passive support
- Active support
- Continuity
- Credibility

**Common themes in legitimation strategies via CA concept “Conversion factors”**

INPUT Legitimation strategies Bos en Lommer / Chelsea / Doornkop

ANALYZING Conversion factors into “Deliberative capabilities”

- Pragmatic
  - Exchange
  - Influence
  - Disposition

- Moral
  - Techniques
  - Structure
  - Procedures
  - Consequences

- Cognitive
  - Knowledgeability
  - Taken for granted
Appendix 3. Sample literature review Community Development Journal

1. Sample consulted articles Community Development Journal 2008-2013
   “Professional legitimacy” and “Legitimacy”


Emejulu, A. (2011). “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for”: community development, collective identity and agency in the age of Obama. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsq047


2. Sample Community Development Journal 2008-2013 with keyword “Profession*”


