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Implementing and Designing Interactive Governance Arenas: A Top-Down Governance Perspective

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Abstract

Mandating interactive governance arenas presents itself as an appealing strategy for determined public policy-makers at the frontier of New Public Governance. However, it also confronts researchers and practitioners with a new set of policy execution problems which prompts re-examination of one of the oldest research questions in public administration research: how and why are the high hopes of central policy-makers (not) translated into practice? Through combining insights from the public policy implementation literature, network governance literature and theories of multi-actor institutional design, the article develops a theoretical perspective for studying top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas. The developed perspective enables researchers and practitioners to identify a number of critical junctions in the implementation process with important implications for the final design of the interactive arenas. A longitudinal case-analysis of the implementation of ten Local Crime Prevention Councils in one of twelve Danish police districts is conducted to demonstrate how the perspective may be deployed in empirical studies.

Keywords:
Implementation
Institutional design
Mandated governance areas
Interactive governance
Cross-sector collaboration

Introduction

Today partnerships, networks and other interactive forms of governance are widely celebrated by public policy-makers as a means of ensuring effective, democratic and innovative public governance (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Torfing et al., 2012; Agger et al., 2015). The surging interest in new forms of cross-cutting collaboration, co-creation and co-production (Bovaird, 2007) has led scholars to suggest that we are in fact witnessing the rise of a whole new participatory and interactive design and delivery regime that is currently transforming public administration in profound ways. Allegedly the new regime, dubbed the *New Public Governance (NPG*), is emerging as a response to the shortcomings of the bureaucratic public policy and implementation regime of *Classical Public Administration (CPA)* and the more recent market-oriented, managerial regime of *New Public Management (NPM)* (Osborne, 2006, 2010; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013; Morgan & Cook, 2014; Lindberg, Czarniawska & Solli, 2015).

The many promises of cross-sector collaboration advanced in contemporary policy discourses across policy fields provide strong incentives for central political decision-makers to craft policies that deliberately attempt to shift the balance from CPA and NPM to NPG. Rather than formulating and adopting public programmes, public officials are encouraged to foster and lead interactive governance that cuts across silos and prompts public and private actors to come together to confront new problems as they arise (Ansell & Gash, 2012; Krogh & Torfing, 2015; Sørensen, Lidström & Hanssen, 2015; Bockstette et al., 2014). Mandating interactive governance arenas is one way of doing so which presents itself as an appealing strategy for determined public policy-makers at the frontier of NPG.

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However, on closer study, mandating interactive governance proves to be a perilous policy strategy. If the implementation process is not managed in ways that consider the specific dynamics of multi-level, multi-actor interaction in and around collaborative governance institutions, the central push for more collaboration may in fact end up worsening collaborative relations between local actors and leave them with inefficient and tokenistic governance arrangements.

Local Crime Prevention Councils (LCPCs) in Denmark are an illustrative case of some key policy execution problems pertaining to top-down implementation of NPG practices. In order to ensure sustained collaboration between the local police, local government and local community organisations, the Danish Ministry of Justice required the District Police to set up cross-sector collaborative arenas in each municipality within the police district following the Danish Police Reform of 2007. However, newly derived empirical data shows that *private actors have been formally excluded from 75 of 97[1] LCPCs*, i.e. the vast majority of the councils consist solely of public authorities.[2] How and why did the noble ambitions of advancing cross-sector collaboration translate into this?

This article sets out to develop a theoretical perspective that will deepen our understanding of the specific policy execution problems of top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas and how such problems may be bridled. In order to do so, the article first critically examines different schools of policy implementation research and their primary explanations of policy execution problems. Special attention is paid to their respective fortes and inadequacies for analysing top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas. Insights from the network governance literature are introduced in order to develop the contours of a top-down governance perspective on implementation. Second, theories of multi-actor institutional design are consulted to grasp the specific dynamics of multi-actor governance arrangements and further develop the perspective. Third, the perspective is operationalized and applied to the case of the Danish LCPCs in order to demonstrate its usefulness in grasping the vertical and horizontal dynamics of multi-level, multi-actor implementation processes. Finally, the article concludes by summing up the lessons learned and reflecting upon the prospects of advancing New Pubic Governance through top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas.

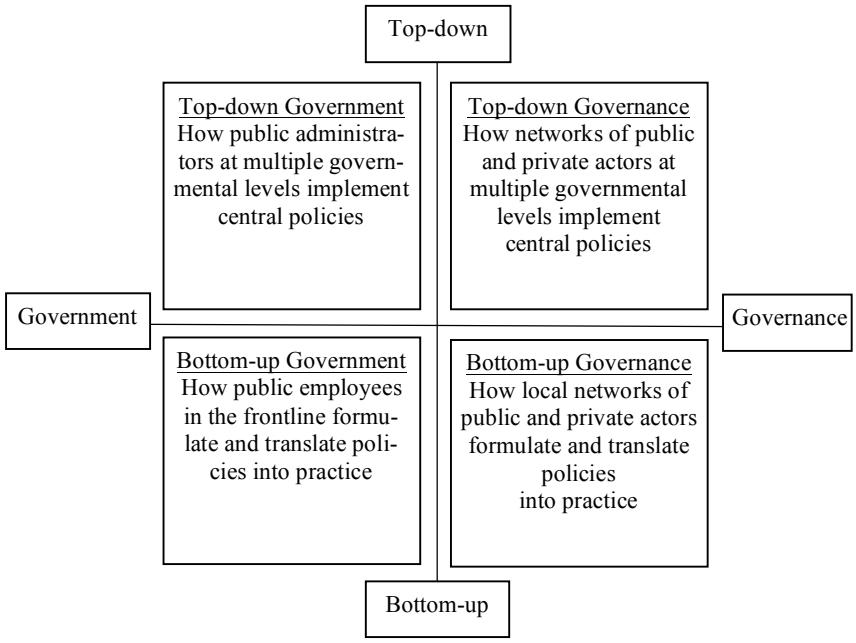
Four perspectives on public policy formulation and implementation

In order to understand what is at stake when implementing interactive governance arrangements, we are well advised to consult the vast body of implementation research within the field of public administration. I suggest using the well-known top-down/bottom-up, government/governance distinctions implicitly or explicitly deployed in all policy studies to get a hold of the available perspectives. These concepts are intuitive for most public administration researchers; however, for the

sake of accuracy the following definitions apply. *Top-down perspectives* focus their attention on processes through which policies formulated by central policy-makers translate into practice through vertical chains of implementation. *Bottom-up perspectives* consider how local actors play a key role in both formulating and translating policies into practice. *Government perspectives* are concerned with policy formation and implementation in and around formal political institutions and public bureaucracies. *Governance perspectives* are concerned with policy formation and implementation in networks of public and private actors.

Crossing the two dimensions provides us with four distinct (groupings of) perspectives on policy formulation and implementation with each their specific set of research interests, assumptions and normative biases: a top-down government perspective, a bottom-up government perspective, a bottom-up governance perspective, and a top-down governance perspective. A graphic representation of the conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The top-down/bottom-up, government/governance matrix



In the following subsections, I will sketch out the four perspectives in terms of their key propositions and consider both their value and shortcomings for the analysis of multi-level, multi-actor implementation processes.

The top-down government perspective

Following the seminal work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), a *top-down government perspective* dominated much of implementation research in its early

years. This perspective is mainly concerned with the failure of realizing the original goals of government programmes as defined in the policy statutory. Any opinions, ideas and perspectives of lower level actors that diverge from those formulated by central policy-makers are seen as illegitimately distorting elements that should be repressed. From this perspective, implementation failure occurs due to (too) long implementation chains with (too) many communication links and potential veto-points, which threatens to obscure the policy as formulated by central decision-makers. In order to decrease the risk of original policy goals being distorted, the number of actors involved in implementation should be reduced (Pressman & Wildawsky, 1973). Moreover, central policy-makers should state policy goals clearly (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983); develop detailed means-ends schemes (Elmore, 1982); and place the responsibility for implementation in an agency sympathetic with the intent of the policy to be implemented (Sabatier, 1986).

The top-down government perspective points to the fact that shifts in levels may cause shifts in the form and content of the policy in question, especially if multiple agencies are involved. The perspective hence prompts researchers to pay attention to potential policy alterations occurring at each new level in the implementation process.

By defining any alterations to the original policy formulation as a failure, however, the perspective effectively disregards the concerns and potentially valuable contributions of lower-level actors. In brief, the importance of voice, ownership and co-design for successful policy implementation is neglected.

The bottom-up government perspective

Critiques of the basic assumptions of the top-down perspective were voiced in the late 1970's and early 1980's, which eventually led to the heated top-down/bottom-up debate in implementation studies (Linders & Peters, 1987; Lester et al., 1987). Scholars deploying a *bottom-up government perspective* pointed to the fact that public employees in the frontline are not simply loyal implementers that do what they are told as long as the message is clear; they effectively make policy based on their perceptions, their situation and own self-interest. Lipsky (1980) showed how street-level bureaucrats such as policemen, teachers and social workers make discretionary decisions, establish routines and devise strategies to cope with the cross-pressures of conflicting goals and norms, large caseloads, inadequate resources and uncertainties. This may be done by routinizing services, controlling users or lowering demand.

The bottom-up government perspective recognizes the existence of vertical conflicts of interests between levels while granting some degree of legitimacy to the concerns of actors operating on lower levels. Policy analysts as well as central policy-makers are thus prompted to consider the interests and (limited) resources of implementing actors.

Being less concerned with the acts of central policy-makers, however, the literature written from the bottom-up government perspective rarely explicitly considers how public managers may contribute to successful implementation. Like the top-down government perspective, potentially positive contributions by local actors are hence difficult to track: local influence must be avoided rather than cultivated. Finally, the perspective solely focuses on the vertical dimension of public bureaucracy and has little to say about cross-sector policy design and implementation.

The bottom-up governance perspective

In the early 1980's, Benny Hjern and colleagues introduced a *bottom-up governance perspective* on implementation with their key concept of implementation structures (Hjern & Porter, 1981; Hjern & Hull, 1982). Implementation structures are defined as interconnected clusters of firms, governments and associations that come together within the framework of public programmes "almost irrespective of mandates from the central levels" (Hjern & Porter, 1981: 215). The perspective views such inter-organisational networks as an important resource for the implementation process. Local adaptation of public policies is seen as desirable as it ensures a better fit between public policy and the specific needs and capabilities of the local community. Hence, central policy-makers should not seek to avoid substantial variation in policy delivery across locales; rather they must expect and appreciate it as it reflects the adjustment to local conditions informed by the contextual knowledge of the pool of organisations from which the implementation structure is formed. Exponents of the perspective thus recommend flexible policy implementation that allows for considerable local autonomy.

The bottom-up government perspective recognizes the existence of private actors and their importance for shaping public policies, especially at the local level. Taking the lack of control by central authorities as a basic condition, it makes an important analytical contribution by re-conceptualizing new policies as triggers of complex multi-actor interactions rather than well-defined programmes that should be loyally implemented according to central plans.

However, while the government perspectives delineated above were biased towards a negative interpretation of alteration made by local actors, the bottom-up governance perspective tends to over-emphasize the positive contribution of local actors. Hence it easily ends up surrendering control of policy to implementers. The perspective either presupposes the willing cooperation of local network actors in realizing central policy goals or, in cases where vertical conflict arises, grants privilege to the interests of the local actors by conceptualizing alterations as necessary and desirable adaptations to local conditions. Hence, it tends to neglect the negative aspects of local influence stemming from bias of local coalitions, conflicting interests between local actors and established power structures. For that reason it does not consider viable strategies for handling such situations.

The top-down governance perspective

During the 1990's, the government-governance debate really took off and protagonists of the governance perspective such as Kooiman (1993) and Rhodes (1994, 1996, 1997) argued the emergence of more differentiated polities and increasingly complex social-political arrangements. Under these conditions, the very term 'implementation' became associated with a lost age of Classical Public Administration and the amount of public administration research directly using the term started to regress (Hupe & Sætren, 2014). While the first generation of interactive governance literature focused on governance networks as distinct governance mechanisms differing from hierarchies and markets (e.g. Marin & Mayntz, 1991; March & Rhodes, 1992), a second generation emerged in the late 1990's and early 2000s which introduced network management and metagovernance as central concepts (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997; Pierre, 2000; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). Even though the label might not sit well with the authors, we may use their theories to distil a *top-down governance perspective* on policy formulation and implementation.

The top-down governance perspective recognizes the legitimacy of central policy-makers to formulate policies and the importance of ensuring the fulfilment of the policy objectives formulated by political leadership (like the top-down government perspective). At the same time, the links between local governmental actors, private businesses and community organisations are seen as important for mobilizing knowledge and competencies that can help qualify the policies in question and facilitate successful implementation (like the bottom-up governance perspective). Local actors are, however, not simply conceptualized as benevolent and conductive to policy implementation by definition, but as situated actors with particular goals, interests and world-views that may obstruct the policies coming 'from above' (like the bottom-up government perspective).

Hence, the top-down governance perspective recognizes both the vertical and horizontal dimension of implementation processes as well as the need to encourage constructive participation from both public agencies and private stakeholders. It is based on the premise that the concerns and interests of key (public and private) stakeholders must be served by a policy (or governance arrangement) for it to effective. For that reason, strengthening public policy-makers' hierarchical control over the process (as proposed by the top-down government perspective) is not seen as a viable strategy for ensuring successful implementation. In fact various forms of command-and-control are posited to be outright counterproductive in multi-organisational settings since the operationally autonomous actors will withdraw from the process if other actors try to force their will on them (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Government actors must rather govern through incentive structures, facilitative process management and mediation between potentially 'reluctant partners' (cf. Stoker, 1991).

While the interactive governance literature, particularly theories of metagovernance and network management, offers valuable insights on how to manage

complex processes of multi-actor policy-making, a number of assumptions imbedded in the perspective may cause blind spots in the analysis of multi-level, multi-actor implementation processes. First, it tends to assume that public and private managers are interested in, and to some extent able to, act as more or less neutral, facilitative metagovernors that ensure the inclusion of relevant actors and support their interaction in order to reach common goals. By doing so, it fails to recognize the metagovernor as a situated actor with specific interests in the composition and agenda of the governance arena that may be a barrier for achieving well-functioning networks. Second, the perspective tends to focus on how a single metagovernor/network manager may assemble and direct networks. By doing so, it fails to capture the multi-actor dynamics of institutional design and management processes. Third, it sometimes assumes a strategic rationale in the design of new arenas that neglects the power plays and interest-based negotiations between multiple metagovernors.

In order to make up for these shortcomings and make the top-down governance perspective more apt for studying implementation of mandated governance arenas, we will now turn to theories of multi-actor institutional design.

Multi-actor institutional design of mandated governance arenas

Interactive design theory asserts that institutional designs are rarely derived at out of rational, strategic and benevolent considerations of how best to attain collective goals and optimize task performance. Rather multi-actor design processes are shaped by the fact that new governance institutions are likely to alter the distribution of resources and relative influence of key actors.

As Erik-Hans Klijn and Joop Koppenjan (2006) points out, multi-actor institutional design often unfolds as "a negotiation game in a garbage can-type context" characterized by "complicated and lengthy procedures" taking place in an "uncertain institutional environment" where the final design must be interpreted as "the result of the process of pushing and pulling between parties" (p. 155). From this perspective, each attempt at changing the composition and set of network rules is *ex post* a power struggle structured by past interactions, choices and power relations, which leads to the institutionalization of distributive advantages, the mobilization of bias and the exclusion of certain actors, interests and issues (ibid.: 146-148).

As Jens Blom-Hansen (1997) asserts, the collective output of multi-actor institutional design processes may be compromised if and when a 'logic of one-sided distributional advantage' kicks in, where powerful actors seek to create and shape the new institutions as a means for pursuing their own interests and gain strategic advantages at the expense of less powerful actors. Within this logic of action, "actors who fundamentally disagree with the purposes served by the institutions and who are harmed by their effects […] pursue a strategy of crippling the institutions as much as possible", which may very well lead to "rationally strange and inefficient institutions" (ibid.: 680). The design of new arenas is hence shaped

by the different interests and orientations of the actors involved and may fall victim to situations where one or more of the designers deploy defensive strategies that directly seek to cripple the new institutions.

Furthermore, Erik-Hans Klijn (2005) notes that "lengthy implementation processes typically have unanticipated consequences as actors attempt to adapt institutional reforms to their own needs" (p. 334). These unanticipated consequences, we may add, could run counter to the central policy intent as well as the interests of the implementing designers themselves.

The theoretical exposition allows us to formulate three propositions on the dynamics and specific challenges pertaining to top-down implementation of interactive governance arrangements.

First, local actors with a vested (self-)interest in the institutional set-up of a given policy field cannot be assumed to favour the establishment of new governance arenas mandated by central government. On the contrary, the fact that the proposed governance arena has not already been established by the local actors themselves may well indicate that the existing power structures and interdependency relations do not support such interactive governance mechanism. Especially in situations where established regime actors have not been involved in the process leading up to the central initiation of the new arenas, the implementation process may be hampered by defensive strategies that seek to cripple the new arenas as much as possible.

Second, when a governance arrangement is mandated by law, lead agencies may be tempted to (re-)design the institution to fit their own purposes during the implementation process, e.g. by ascribing formal powers to the arena, excluding other actors from the arena, and/or assigning leadership roles to themselves. Since the voluntary participation of other organisations is needed for collaborative arenas to produce anything of value, they may, however, cripple the new governance arena by doing so. Since the public agencies and private actors in the field cannot dissolve the mandated arena – even if they do not find it to be mutually beneficial – dissatisfied actors are left with the option of pursuing more defensive strategies of *de facto* weakening the significance of the new arena by withdrawing competencies and other resources.

Third, if new governance arenas are conceptualized as formal bodies that are able to make binding decisions affecting those involved as well as others – rather than platforms for voluntary interaction between operationally autonomous actors – then the lead agency will be inclined to exclude other actors since such exclusion will enhance rather than diminish the lead agency's control over the arena and its domain. We may further hypothesize that this situation is most likely to occur if and when public agencies act as sole designers. Hence if private stakeholders are not involved in the design of a new interactive governance arena that they are expected to participate in – and if their interests have not been brought into the design phase by any other means – then there is a greater risk of developing bureaucratic designs that limit their influence and active participation on the arena.

The three propositions point to the fact that it is highly important who are involved (and who are not involved) as partners and co-designers in the implementation process. Process design strategies (Klijn, 2005) may be deployed in order to structure the implementation process in ways that build support and broad ownership to the new governance arena; ensure the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the design phase; and avoid policy capture by a single agency. This may be done by distributing leadership roles among more than one agency from the outset; by requiring lead agencies to consult relevant stakeholders on the institutional design; and by setting up pay-off structures that will encourage public and private stakeholders to participate. Implementation managers may also deploy process management strategies that help parties bridge their differences and avoid destructive conflicts; facilitate the actual inclusion of different interests and perspectives; and ensure that the overall policy objectives are not lost of sight. Whether or not such strategies have been pursued – and how the implementation process design has impacted on the interactive design process – is an important focal point for policy-makers and policy analysts who wish to bolster and/or understand such processes.

Applying the perspective to the case of the LCPCs

In order to illustrate how the synthesis between implementation theory, network governance theory and multi-actor design theory can help us understand and explain policy execution problems pertaining to the top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas, I will proceed to apply the theoretical perspective to the case of the Local Crime Prevention Councils (LCPCs) in Denmark. It is beyond the scope of the article to provide a comprehensive analysis of the specific case in question, yet alone to make generalizable proclamations based on the results. The case analysis simply serves as an initial (and cursory) attempt at putting the perspective to work that illustrates the applied use of the perspective.

Before embarking on the case analysis itself, a few words on case selection and data collection methods should be stated. Hopefully these methodological reflections can inspire other researchers to apply and develop the perspective in and through empirical case analysis.

Case selection

The illustrative case is strategically selected to exhibit policy problems pertaining to top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas. Contemporary police reforms in Western Europe seem particularly suited as critical cases for showcasing and investigating some of these problems since they tend to be "firmly embedded in a vertical, state-oriented vision" (Terpstra and Fyfe, 2013: 6) while at the same time placing significant emphasis on community-oriented policing and multi-agency collaboration (Verhage et al., 2010). We can hence expect to find tensions between logics of vertical government and horizontal governance to be particularly prevalent in such reforms.

As mentioned in the introduction, the LCPCs were introduced as a part of the Danish police reform of 2007 to advance collaborative crime prevention between the local police, local government and local community organisations. As such it must be considered a least likely case in terms of successful implementation of interactive governance arenas. Moreover, the specific institutional conditions of the Danish LCPC case also satisfy the conditions advanced in the theoretical framework (see section 5.1 for further explanation).

In order to conduct an analysis of the implementation process from top to bottom, one of 12 police districts was strategically selected for further investigation. The selected police district is distinct in the sense that it started out by limiting the number of community organisations in its ten LCPCs before redesigning the councils and expanding the number of community organisations. Today it is the only police district that has included community actors in all of its LCPCs.[3] The specific police district was selected since the longitudinal variance in the LCPC design allows for an exploration of both conductive and constraining factors.

Based on the analysis it is not possible to generalize the findings to other police districts with different implementation trajectories. However, the analysis points to important focal points that should be subjected to further studies in other Danish police districts and in other cases of top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas. As mentioned, the case analysis is conducted with the purpose of illustration.

Data collection methods

A combination of forward and backward mapping (Elmore, 1982) was used to reconstruct the implementation process and identify critical moments of (re-)design. Three steps were taken.

First, written material from the process was gathered through public sources, formal requests of access to records and documents, and direct contacts in the police. The obtained documents were scanned for references to other documents which were then specifically requested; this was done until no further documents could be identified.

Second, the gathered material of parliamentary committee proceedings, ministerial directives, LCPC rules of procedure, and internal working documents was systematically reviewed and classified according to time and level of application (national/regional/local). The classification served to recreate a vertical implementation chain ranging from top to bottom in a linear progression over time.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors who had been involved in the design negotiations at each step in the implementation process. The theoretical perspective prompts us to obtain insights on the motivations, interests and agendas of the actors involved in crafting the design of the new arena, which served as the main purpose of the interviews.

Four critical moments of (re-)design were identified and expounded in this way (see table 1).

In the following section I will first provide some background on the specific institutional context; then review each moment in terms of its main actors, their considerations and the resulting design features; and finally consider the implementation process as a whole.

Table 1: Overview of Critical Moments of Redesign in the Implementation Process

Critical Moment	Level	Involved Actors	Main Document	Interviewees
Spring of 2006	National	MPs in the Legal Committee and civil servants in the Ministry of Justice	Ministerial answer	Two civil servants in the Ministry of Justice
Fall of 2006	National	National Police, Local Police, National SSP Council, and the Danish Crime Prevention Council	Preparatory Police Reform Implementation Report	Two high-level managers from the National Police and the Danish Crime Prevention Council
Spring of 2007	District	District Police and public executives from the Local Governments in the district	LCPC Rules of Procedure	A Chief Superintendent from the District Police and two public executives from Local Government
Spring of 2010	District	District Police and public executives from the Local Governments in the district	Revised LCPC Rules of Procedure	(Same as above)

Case analysis

The institutional governance context: The SSP cooperation

The theoretical prompts us to survey the institutional environment in order to understand the established positions of key actors in the field and how the new governance arena may alter the distribution of resources and relative influence of the actors.

Denmark has a long tradition for collaborative crime prevention. Since the 1970's, the so-called SSP cooperation between Schools, Social services and Police

has formed the backbone of Danish crime prevention (Kankaala, 2015). The primary objective of the SSP is to prevent juvenile crime among children and youth in the age of 6-18 years old through individual case work, targeted interventions towards groups at risk and general education and guidance to the age group at large (Ssp.kk.dk).

Taken as a whole, the SSP has developed into a comprehensive and well-organized institution with collaborative forums on multiple levels. While the exact way of organizing the SSP cooperation varies across locales, all Danish municipalities has adopted the scheme in some form (Danish National Board of Social Services, 2008). Local government typically has a significant amount of resources bound up in the SSP structure. Most places local government employ several fulltime SSP coordinators and counsellors. A municipal steering committee headed by politicians and/or administrators from local government typically coordinate the local SSP action groups (ibid.). While the police are typically represented in the steering committees, local government remains the lead actor in the cooperation.

As we shall see, the struggle over the division of labour and relative importance of the new LCPCs vis-a-vis the established SSP institution was pivotal when national and local actors were to implement and design the new governance arrangement. The implementation of the LCPC's coincided with two major structural reforms that impacted on the hitherto existing institutional set-up: the 2007 Police Reform and 2007 Local Government Reform. The Police Reform reduced the number of police districts from 54 districts to 12 districts, and the Local Government Reform reduced the number of municipalities from 271 municipalities to 98 municipalities.

While the implementation of the LCPCs took place in a policy field with long traditions of inter-agency collaboration and clear divisions of labour between the key actors, the two structural reforms created a new and temporarily uncertain institutional environment where the future organisation of crime prevention in the new and larger districts and municipalities, including the prime institutions of coordination, was yet to be defined. The institutional conditions were hence conductive to power-ridden negotiations and attempts at expanding, defending or solidifying the individual agencies' relative influence and control over resources through institutional design of the new arenas (cf. section 3 above).

Spring of 2006: General policy of the LCPCs (National level)

A few months before the police reform bill was to be passed in parliament, the prospect of fewer and much larger police districts triggered widespread public concern that the local anchorage of policing would dwindled and that the collaborative ties would suffer (Balvig, Holmberg & Nielsen, 2011: 47). The introduction of so-called District Councils in each of the new police districts, where the District Police Commissioner meets with the Mayors of the municipalities in the district at least four times a year, was not enough to dampen the concerns. Mayors

from peripheral municipalities criticized the fact that no main police station would be placed in their municipality and started exerting political pressure through the national parliamentary parties who also had considerable interests in local politics.

In the first reading of the bill in the parliamentary Legal Committee in mid-Marts 2006, the social-democratic member of the committee declared that:

> The presence of police in local communities will be weakened if the bill concerning the new District Councils is not supplemented with a new local structure, where the police, the municipal authorities, the SSP employees and for instance the Night Ravens [non-profit street outreach association] and other local networks can strengthen the prevention of crime. (Ft.dk, 2006)

Later in the same round of negotiation, the more general concern was translated into a specific policy proposal by the same spokesperson:

> Would it be possible to establish new crime preventive councils around the prospective sub-stations that were given the task of strengthening the prevention of crime and mobilize the local community organisations, schools, police and other authorities for a far better prevention of crime in these areas? (ibid.)

The LCPCs were formally adopted as official policy with the support of the major parties in parliament in a two-page long ministerial answer to a question posed by one of the reform partners in the Legal Committee two weeks before passing the reform bill. The answer states that:

> …the Ministry of Justice finds it to be a natural task of the District Police Commissioners to establish local collaboration forums ("local councils") in the individual municipalities with representatives from the police, local government and the local community. (Danish Ministry of Justice, 2006)

The written answer is formulated within a relatively short time span in the Ministry of Justice and only involves a few requirements and guidelines for the design of the new collaborative forums. It states that the primary purposes of the councils is to advance collaborative crime problem-solving at a local level; to ensure sustained contact between the police and the local community; and to translate the general frames and goals of the Police District into practice. The District Police Commissioner is imbued with the power to define the specific tasks of the councils and the Local Police Commander is expected to prepare and lead the council meetings with the aim of ensuring that the local police will get the widest possible knowledge of local developments.

As such, the statutory grants both a privileged design position to the District Police Commissioners (in practice the police as such) and a privileged leadership position to the Local Police Commander. Hence, the implicit implementation process design grants the police the main responsibility for convening and defining the agenda of the new arenas.

Fall of 2006: Ascription of formal decision-making powers (National level)

During the fall of 2006, a crucial report for the design of the LCPCs is completed. The report is composed by a working group under the National Police consisting of police officers from the Local Police (4), municipal employees from the National SSP Council (2), and experts from the Danish Crime Prevention Council (2).

In the report, published internally on the Danish police intranet in February 2007, a quite radical redesign of the LCPCs occurs. The report sets out to ensure a clear distribution of roles between old and new collaborative forums. To serve that end, the report recommends a three-layered structure where: 1) the District Council serves as the strategic forum for leadership of all collaborative crime prevention in the district (the strategic level); 2) the LCPCs are responsible for coordinating all collaborative crime prevention in the municipality (the operative level); and 3) the local arenas for collaboration such as the local SSP action groups execute the action plans (the tactical level).

The statutory LCPC task of translating the general frames and goals of the Police District into practice is now elevated to a central organizing principle of an entire collaborative crime prevention structure. The police hold the position of lead organisation in both the strategic District Council and the operative LCPCs. In the proposed governance structure, the well-established SSP institution led by local government is all of a sudden subsumed under the new police-led governance institutions.

The LCPCs are now ascribed both formal decision-making powers and resource allocation powers. Every year, each LCPC should craft three types of plans: 1) a local action plan that coordinates all collaborative crime prevention activities in the municipality based on the strategic plan of the District Council and the local crime prevention needs; 2) a local action plan that defines the activities of the local police concerning law enforcement and police-counselling on security issues; and 3) a plan for the distribution of resources for competence development around crime prevention in the municipality.

The composition of the LCPCs largely goes by without mentioning apart from the referenced wording in the statutory. Community organisations are still assumed to be a part of the LCPCs. It is pointed out specifically that the head of the SSP cooperation in the municipality should participate in the LCPCs due to the (newly ascribed) formal role of the forum.

At first sight, this redesign ostensibly strengthens community participation in the new governance arrangements since the new collaborative forums are given a

more central role in the crime prevention structure and endowed with formal decision-making and resource allocation powers. However, the theoretical framework allows us to see how this redesign in fact may serve to complicate cross-sector collaboration and de facto limit community influence.

The idea that the police-led District Council sets strategic goals for the LCPCs, who will then craft local action plans for the SSP to follow, rests on a hierarchical logic of government. It ignores the fact that interactive governance relies on the willingness of operationally autonomous organisations to enter into agreements on joint action. If forced to follow police-led decisions taken elsewhere when interacting on the arena, other public and private actors are likely to either withdraw from the arena or to pursue defensive strategies of crippling the arena.

As we shall see next, the fatal redesign promotes a logic of one-sided distributional advantage where public actors seek to retain control of the policy field by limiting the number of participating private actors.

Spring of 2007: Curtailment of community participation (District level)

At the district level, the District Police first responds to the national redesign with a defensive strategy that aims to shield itself from external influence on police priorities. It is speculated that a forum with formal powers will enable local community actors to "take revenge" following the centralizing police reform and force the police to deal with neighborhood-specific issues (interview with Police Commissioner). As a response, the District Police draws up a design proposal to be discussed with the Local Governments in the district. In order to inhibit community actors from imposing tasks on the police, formal voting procedures are introduced and the number of participating community actors is limited to three:

> It was implied that the Local Councils were to have some form of influence on the local priorities of the police. […] The voting procedures were a precautionary measure. We shielded ourselves. Because we were not sure what we were signing up for (Police Commissioner, interview).

Having ensured the majority of public actors in the councils, the District Police by and large adopted the District Council-LCPC-SSP structure from the national policy report in the design proposal. It is, however, slightly changed to the advantage of the police: While the LCPCs should not craft any action plans for the local police, they should do so for the SSP. It is thus suggested that the existing SSP coordination councils are replaced by, or subsumed under, the LCPCs.

The proposed District Council-LCPC-SSP structure makes Local Government react with great skepticism. Local Government has two objections. Firstly, the proposed design is seen to shift the power-balance from Local Government to the police:

> The police said: "Let the Local Councils be the locus of all collaboration between police and Local Government." That was when we had to put on the breaks. Suddenly they were closing down our SSP organisation. […] They wanted to transfer decision-making power from the political and administrative level in the municipalities to the police station. We didn't want that. It is life blood we are dealing with here (Municipal civil servant A, interview).

Secondly, the proposed design is seen to give private community organisations too big of a say on the coordinated prevention of crime and thus the priorities of Local Government:

> When the police introduced the idea that the Local Councils should govern the prevention of crime and the municipal SSP funds, we simply had to tell them: "Forget it!" We cannot give a Local Council involving community actors the decision-making authority over Local Government. It probably wouldn't be legal at all, and it definitely wouldn't be functional (Municipal civil servant B, interview).

The worries of both police and Local Government that the new forum would give civil society actors too big of a say in deciding on the priorities of public authorities leave the parties with two design options: remove the formal decision-making power from the LCPCs or exclude civil society actors from the arena. The police and Local Government agree to wear both belts and braces by removing all formal decision-making powers of the LCPCs and ensuring their own majority in the councils with a 3-3-3 composition (three representatives from police, local government, and civil society, respectively).

The design implemented in 2007 is hence shaped by very different logics, interests and ideas than the ones giving birth to the LCPC initiative. The LCPCs were conceived as a set of collaborative governance institutions that were to ensure local anchorage of policing and bolster cross-sector collaboration on crime prevention. Now it is about keeping otherwise resourceful civil society organisations at bay in order to limit community power over the public authorities.

According to the theoretical framework advanced above, however, we can expect that the removal of formal decision-making power from the arena may pave the way for greater community participation and collaboration in the long run. That is exactly what happens when the design of the LCPCs in the district is evaluated three years later and eventually changed once again in 2010.

Spring of 2010: Expansion of community participation (District level)

After some time, the local designers realize that the formal exclusion of other actors only made sense within the bureaucratic government design proposed by the District Police on the basis of the national policy report:

> Our initial fear was gone. We could now see that it was not about telling the police what to do. […] We then said: Okay then, let all civil society actors who want to participate do so (Police Commissioner, interview).

The reasons for limiting the number of community actors had evaporated when formal decision-making powers were withdrawn from the arena (and actions trying to force the police to make specific priorities had proven to be absent in praxis). It was now decided to include up to eight community organisations in each council.

At the same time, the status of the appointed community organisations was changed from standing members to ad hoc participants to be called in for meetings if the Local Police Commander deems them relevant for the issues to be discussed at the given meeting. In actual fact, however, all the formally appointed community organisations are invited for all meetings:

> Today everyone is invited for all meetings in order to ensure continuity. It is the logical conclusion since no one formally decides anything. Formal decisions are made by the local sheriff, Local Government or whoever has the authority on a given issue (Municipal civil servant A, interview).

The final result of the implementation process in the District was a forum where no one formally decides anything, but where everyone can join.

The LCPC Implementation Process from Mandate to Final Design

The LCPC implementation process exhibits the potentially crippling effects of power-ridden design negotiations that: i) take place in times of institutional turmoil; ii) are structured by an unfavorable (top-down government) implementation design; and, as a result, iii) involve policy capture by the lead agency, redesigns based on hierarchical and formalistic logics of government, and power strategies based on a logic of one-sided distributional advantage.

The theoretical propositions on conductive top-down governance policy designs advanced above enable us to see how tensions were intensified rather than alleviated by the statutory LCPC policy design (spring of 2006). The policy was an outcome of political negotiations between national politicians and did not go through a hearing or any other forms of deliberative process among relevant public

and private stakeholders before it was adopted. No other ministries than the Ministry of Justice were involved and the initial phase involved no stakeholder influence, awareness or ownership. The sole responsibility for implementing and leading the LCPCs was placed with the police without any obligations to consult relevant stakeholders on the design or the setting up of any pay-off structures to encourage public and private stakeholders to participate in the design process. Hence the risk of both policy capture and LCPC designs based on a formalistic logic of government was imminent in the process design from the outset.

Following the theoretical perspective, the fatal redesign occurring in the national policy report under the auspices of the National Police (fall of 2006) can be interpreted as the outcome of an (unchecked) power strategy on the part of police. The police make use of their privileged design position to expand their influence vis-à-vis other public and private actors by turning the police-led LCPCs into formal steering committees for already established collaborative arenas at the community level. As a response, the local actors react with crippling strategies by severely curtailing the formal inclusion of community actors in the new governance structure (spring of 2007).

After some years, a logic of governance enters the design process, which makes the inclusion of (more) community actors a means for increasing the power and practical utility of the forums (spring of 2010). This is conditioned upon the fact that the institutional environment has stabilized and policy learning has occurred: no formal decision-making powers have been granted to the LCPCs 'from above' and interaction with community actors in the councils has proven that no attempts are made at forcing the local police or local government representatives to act against their will 'from below'.

Taken as a whole, the LCPC case analysis has illustrated the challenges proposed in the theoretical framework. It has shown how top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas may be compromised by active resistance from local actors with a vested interest in the existing institutional set-up; by lead agency attempts at redesigning new arenas to fit their own purposes; and by hierarchical and formalistic logics of government that turn arenas into formal bodies able to make binding decisions affecting those involved as well as others.

Conclusions

Mandating interactive governance arenas presents itself as an appealing strategy for central policy-makers in an age of New Public Governance (NPG). As this article has argued, however, it also confronts researchers and practitioners with a new set of policy execution problems that prompts us to re-examine some of the earliest research questions in public administration research and consider new and more suitable strategies for managing public policy implementation.

The theoretical perspective on top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas developed in this article incorporates insights from network governance literature and theories of multi-actor institutional design. It posits that the final output of the implementation process, i.e. the design of the mandated arena in question, must be interpreted as the result of more or less overt power struggle between situated actors who attempt to expand, defend or solidify their relative influence and control over resources. It suggests that the blatant use of offensive and defensive power strategies deployed within a logic of one-sided distributional advantage is likely to cripple the interactive governance arenas in their ability to serve as platforms for inter-agency coordination and cross-sector collaboration. The risk of failed implementation is accelerated in times of institutional turmoil where the involved parties find themselves in a situation with high levels of uncertainty in terms of future role divisions and resource allocations.

The article has suggested that policy execution problems may be bridled by deploying appropriate implementation design and management strategies. Involving relevant stakeholders early on the process, distributing leadership roles among several agencies and mediating between the involved parties during the implementation process lowers the risks of policy capture by a single agency and design negotiations proceeding from a logic of one-sided distributional advantage. The need for implementation management can be expected to be particularly pertinent in polities and policy fields populated by strong public actors who, more or less intentionally, easily end up crowding out other relevant stakeholders.

It follows from the theoretical assertions that polities, policy areas and public agencies with long histories of interactive governance and cross-sector collaboration are more apt for top-down implementation of interactive governance arenas. The risk of formalistic government designs decreases if the involved parties are accustomed to cross-sector collaboration between operationally autonomous actors. However, policy-makers, implementation managers and researchers should be aware that such experience is no guarantee that agencies will refrain from deploying offensive power strategies in the hope of expanding their relative influence in the field if and when the opportunity arises.

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Notes

[1] Of the 98 Danish municipalities, all have established one LCPC except for: the municipalities of Copenhagen, Dragør and Tårnby in the Capital Region, which were exempted due to an already well-established structure of local committees; the municipality of the island of Læsø, which was deemed too small for an LCPC; and the municipality of the island of Bornholm, which decided to establish four LCPCs instead of one. This makes a total of 97 LCPCs.

[2] The data on the composition of the LCPCs was collected in the spring of 2015 by Danish National Police in collaboration with the researcher.

[3] Analysing the data on the present composition of the LCPCs, we find that one police district has included community organisations in all of its local councils, three districts have included community members in some of their councils, and one district has included private citizens in all of their councils. The remaining seven police districts have not included community members or private citizens in any of their LCPCs.