Marta Strumińska-Kutra

Democratizing Public Management

Towards Practice-Based Theory

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Practice-Oriented Reflection on Governance

1.1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, patterns of governing in public administration have evolved into more polycentric systems, with a variety of actors engaged in local decision-making processes. This change is described as a shift from government to governance (Denters 2011), or as the governance turn (Gilardi and Radaelli 2012), defined as placing less emphasis on hierarchy and the state, and giving more prominence to markets and networks (Bevir 2011; Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). A shift towards governance implies the creation of new institutions that enable democratizing processes (Ansell 2011; Bevir 2007). Governance, understood as a specific approach to public management, supplements the traditional channels of representation built upon elections, with more direct and deliberative forms of consent building focused on problem-solving (Ansell 2011). When performing governance, public agencies build democratic consent through collaborative and strategic problem-solving with stakeholders. Democracy here is 'not just a moral value' but is essential for a successful inquiry into the complexity of the problems addressed. Ideally speaking, governance turn makes public management both effective and democratic.

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If governance turn is to bring democratizing change, public administration needs to learn to cooperate with citizens and organized interest groups. The governance turn and attempts to design procedures, policies, and legal regulations implementing the idea of inclusiveness and participation might be well-intentioned, but the process of *learning* and *change* is refracted through practicalities embedded in existing institutions and power struggles between diverse actors involved in governance processes.

The main aim of this book is to propose a theoretical framework elucidating these changes through focusing on the many forms that the governance turn takes at the level of public agencies. I inquire into perceptions and practices of public officials and public agencies' stakeholders struggling to resolve diverse public disputes. Four case studies illustrate the process of learning and institutionalization of governance as a complex and messy phenomenon infiltrated by original, deeply embedded ways of thinking and acting upon public issues, influenced by power asymmetries between actors within and outside public agencies, and pushed forwards by pressures from a wider organizational environment. Theoretical framework emerging from the cases links structural and constructivist moments of governance practice, explaining how structures are changed or maintained by consciously acting individuals (Rhodes 2012). The framework delivers an epistemologically and practically useful method in which to investigate the phenomenon of learning in the public sector, as it focuses on core questions: Why and how does learning unfold? How does governance practice develop, as opposed to the ideal model? The framework provides information on 'critical junctures', configurations of influences making a difference in terms of how governance is learnt and institutionalized. This knowledge can provide us (academics and practitioners) with skills that allow turning spontaneous and adaptive practices based on critical reflection and experimentation *into a planned effort to institutionalize learning*, above all learning in its explorative, double-loop form. It is claimed here that such an institutionalization is necessary in order to ensure good governance, since governance learning is not about transition from traditional, bureaucratic approaches to public administration, to market-based approaches, for example, New Public Management and, eventually, to collaborative and participatory approaches such as New Public Governance. It is about learning how to use and improve each

mode and how to switch between these options and balance them in response to problems that constantly evolve and reappear.

So, I claim that the practice-based framework is potentially useful for academics and practitioners who wish to understand, design, and introduce changes into public administration agencies. In particular, for those who plan to transform the mode of cooperation that public agencies apply with respect to external stakeholders in their attempt to manage public issues and solve various problems of public life. However, I also believe that a general, practice-oriented reflection on governance should include two other areas—first, an area of prescriptive and normative considerations and second, an area of methodological considerations. The connections between the three areas are illuminated below.

1.2 Between Ideal Type of Governance, Governance Practice, and Research on Governance

It is argued here that practice-oriented reflection on governance, that is, reflection-enhancing good governance in practice, needs to relate to the three interconnected issues. First of them is of a *prescriptive and normative* nature. If we want public management and governance to be effective and democratic—what kind of governance models, institutional and organizational designs can we deploy? Which of them deliver on the promise of achieving these qualities? We need these models in order to envision the desired change and discuss where we intend to go. They are useful when thinking about institutional design and about the general qualities of organizational structures and procedures enabling good governance. The second aspect of the *practice-oriented reflection* is descriptive and focuses on the question—how are the desired changes executed? How do institutional conditions influence processes of change, in particular how do they enhance or impede governance learning processes? This descriptive aspect of practice-oriented reflection on governance is invaluable for illuminating realities of the implementation. Within these realities institutions matter and power structures matter. They set the

stages on which governance practitioners act. History matters as well: participants of governance processes will remember the failures of past promises and past leaders. Within and outside public agencies, those involved in governance processes will be plural and have diverse values and interests, and hence diverse perceptions of good governance. Those trying to implement ideal-type models while ignoring the complexity of the setting will discover that reality does not listen. In order to resonate with practitioners experience, research, and theoretical considerations on governance needs to presume complexity, not hide it (Forester 2017; Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011).

The third important aspect of practice-oriented reflection on governance is of *methodological* nature and can be encapsulated in a question: How to make social research matter for public governance? What types of research are useful and relevant for governance practitioners and why? In the academia, the discussion about the relevance of social research for practice naturally gravitates towards discussions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Without saying that it is redundant, it is suggested here that the discussion could be reframed. In a practice-oriented reflection on governance, practitioner and his perceptions of utility should play a primary role, while onto-epistemological issues take the back seat as secondary and subordinated. Within such a frame, practitioner asks academic community: if I need your help while planning, implementing, and improving governance practices, what kinds of support could I get?

In this book I am attempting to address each of the three aspects: prescriptive, descriptive, and methodological.

1.2.1 Prescriptive and Normative Considerations of Governance

Within the first, normative, and prescriptive part of considerations (Chap. 2), it is argued that the governance turn[1] has brought about the need for greater flexibility in choosing the patterns of rule. The traditionally dominant pattern—governing through hierarchy—has been partially replaced by governing through market and governing through networks and collaborative approaches. Hence, normative goals of

governance can be reduced to the following promises: greater effectiveness in delivering public goods and increased inclusiveness of ruling processes.

If the governance turn is to fulfil its promises, ruling bodies need to learn how and when to use new ways of governing. In prescriptive terms, the following question arises: How should the process of learning be managed in order to achieve the desired outcome, that is, more effective and inclusive public management? In the quest for a prescriptive model of good governance, I have recourse to concepts of metagovernance and organizational learning. Their combination provides a fruitful analytical perspective for the inquiry of processes of governance learning and for emphasizing that good governance should be a democratic, effective, and reflexive activity, enabling evolutionary learning for public goals (Ansell 2011). Metagovernance is understood as efforts aimed at improving specific modes of governance (through hierarchy, markets or networks) and as attempts to recompose proportions of governance modes used in a given field. Therefore, the capacity to perform metagovernance is, in fact, tantamount to the capacity to learn. The organizational learning perspective traditionally underscores the difference between learning from past experiences and using knowledge to experiment (Argyris and Schon 1978; March 1991). Taken together, these theoretical lenses enable us to capture phenomena considered here as crucial for the quality of good governance, namely:

- the ability to reflect and learn from past experiences, associated with the application of a specific mode of governing for example, through networks (improving the practice through exploitation and single-loop learning); and
- the ability to re-examine knowledge and redeploy resources in previously unforeseen ways, including the search for new options and experimenting for example, through changing the manner in which a given problem is managed by combining networks with hierarchies (improving the practice through exploration and double-loop learning).

I regard these theories not as describing reality (explaining 'how things work'), but rather as analytical tools helping both academics and practitioners in their attempts at answering the following questions: *What forms of learning should be used and further developed by public agencies? Why and in which situations should these forms of learning be applied?*

Although such deliberation will not shed light on 'how things work', I consider it useful, as it prompts reflection over 'how things should work', that is, over values (like inclusiveness, effectiveness) strived for in governance processes and over (participatory, reflexive) methods of their implementation. Knowing what we want and how we want to achieve it is the first step forwards.

However, if we want to be realistic about the implementation of means and ends, we need to know 'how things work in practice'. If the governance turn is going to bring such desired changes as democratization and increased effectiveness of public governance processes, we need to investigate practices and practitioners involved in these processes. Through reflecting on field observations, we will understand which developments facilitate, and which hinder the attainment of these goals.

1.2.2 Descriptive and Explanatory Considerations

The major part of the book presents reflection from field observations (Chaps. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7). Here, the governance turn is perceived as an opportunity to reflect on learning processes and the mechanisms of institutional change that take place 'on the ground'. I adapt an interpretive, micro perspective focused on social practices related to management. This area remains relatively unexplored by public administration and management scholars (Freeman 2008; Bryson et al. 2010; Peters 2011). One of them points out: "[W]e know surprisingly little about what bureaucrats and administrators do when they are doing their job, let alone about the ways they think and learn" (Freeman 2008, p. 377). To a certain extent, my attempts to reconstruct local perspectives and practices follow interpretive approaches to governance, whose aim is to show how governance arises from the bottom up as a set of conflicting beliefs and competing traditions, and how various dilemmas trigger diverse practices (Rhodes 2012). In contrast to the main representatives of this tradition (Rhodes 2012), I endeavour to maintain a top-down perspective. Governance practices are analysed within the wider context of institutional structures consisting of both formal and informal rules, as well as widely accepted norms that regulate public servants' modes of thinking and day-to-day practices ("indulgency patterns", Gouldner 1954).

In my attempt to analyse the change, I focus on public administration as the subject of learning, and on public dispute as the object of governance. A public dispute is a conflict "involving governmental entities and other parties (individual citizens, business firms, organizations, etc.) over policy priorities, standards, or resources they hope to share" (Susskind 2000, p. 130). Given its characteristics, such as the involvement of multiple and diverse stakeholders, and reference to public issues, it is an area where the process of learning new patterns of governing can be empirically observed (Forester 1999). A public dispute is a political tension point (Flyvbjerg et al. 2012) focused on the most central public management dilemmas and challenges, for example, balancing group interests with broader social interests, or managing public issues in a manner that would be both effective and inclusive (democratic). Moreover, the conflictual character of disputes allows for an inquiry into the role of power struggles and diverse interests groups in the process of institutional change (Hallet and Ventresca 2006). Owing to the focus on the abovementioned features, public dispute is a perfect object of empirical observation, from which theoretical conclusions can be drawn. The theoretical framework is based on the pre-existent perspectives of institutional change and organizational learning and developed in conversation with empirical data derived from four in-depth case studies of public disputes within the Polish institutional environment. Each of them illustrates different levels of complexity in terms of the number of administrative levels involved as both planning and decision-making bodies. Each of them tells a story of how governance meets government, how old ways of thinking and acting are challenged, and eventually, how new and old practices merge to create hybrids containing elements of both. Yet each story has its own narrative and exemplifies a different governance-related problem.

The first dispute (Chap. 4) concerns the closing of a school in a small rural community, where the solution is to be formulated and the decision is to be taken at the lowest level of public administration, that is the municipality. In this case, the narrative is built around local interpretations of governance and participatory practices. It illustrates how the imposed market and legalist rhetoric turn governance into a top-down exercise of power and prevents stakeholders from discussing their values and defining the problem at hand; in the end, the number of possible solutions is greatly reduced.

In the two subsequent cases (Chaps. 5 and 6)—disputes over the location of a market place and of a waste water treatment plant in a large city—the responsibility for planning and decision-making is split between the municipality and the province level. Both cases show how pressure from external stakeholders results in 'fake' governance learning whose goal is not to gain excellence in the delivery of public goods and services, but rather to gain new tools and arguments in the struggle for legitimacy and control in a specific field of policy. Yet, even an instrumental and superficial use of participatory tools, the questioning of a hierarchical logic that has long been taken for granted, creates a powerful precedent that forms the basis on which new governance institutions can be built and opens up a space for negotiations involving all stakeholders. The market place location case delivers interesting insights into the role of public administration's top management leadership. In the situation of institutional void—lack of organizational structures, formal and informal procedures enabling multijurisdictional and multilevel coordination (here referred as *governance void*)—an individual in a top management position takes over the role of an institutional entrepreneur who initiates changes and actively participates in their implementation (Battilana et al. 2009). This case also triggers reflection on the role of institutional leadership (Selznick 1957) in the governance turn that heightens the complexity of values and logics adopted by public administration.

The last case examined is a dispute over the construction of a flood prevention facility and the risk of which is using parts of the land as a polder (Chap. 7). This case illustrates how the inability to critically reflect on the methods and goals of the planning process (i.e. inability to exert double-loop learning), and inability to coordinate processes across different jurisdictions and administration levels, results in a complete failure of governance. It testifies to the force of institutional inertia embedded in established ways of thinking and acting.

These cases are analysed and compared in an iterative process of theoretical reflection and empirical data gathering, eventually leading to the construction of a model illustrating processes of governance learning and institutionalization (Chap. 8). The analysis that shifts between structure (formal and informal rules regulating behaviour) and agency (individual strategic actions) enables us to capture phenomena central to the process

of institutional change and learning in public administration, that is (1) the significance of original institutional environment into which change is introduced; (2) the role of individuals, in particular leaders confronted with pressures and demands for a change; and (3) institutionalization processes, within which the new mode of governance is given a specific form and is henceforth taken for granted. Building linkages between these three levels (or spheres) is a major contribution this book makes to the public management and governance literature. The linkage is visualized as a Russian doll structure of individuals embedded in broader institutional environments, or alternatively as Coleman-like (Coleman 1990) shifts between three levels of analysis: micro, meso, and macro. On the one hand, the framework illustrates how action is triggered and influenced by the existing institutions and their coercive, mimetic and normative pressures; and on the other hand, it depicts chains of interactions creating new institutions and changing the wider organizational and institutional environment. An important advantage of the framework is explicating the difference between learning and institutional change, which is not obvious in governance learning literature (Gilardi and Radaelli 2012).

The analysis moves from zooming in to zooming out. First significance of environmental pressures for governance is explored. Among others, it is argued that coercive pressures (from legal sources) for governance are not likely to trigger learning, unless they are complemented with mimetic and normative pressures, that is pressures stemming from uncertainty and prompting organizations to copy what has proven effective (mimetic), as well as pressures rooted in approaches and orientations of professional groups (normative). As the pressure persist and intensify practitioners experience *governance void.* The term of *governance void* draws on the notion of institutional void (Mair et al. 2012) and is understood as a space where institutional infrastructure supporting collaborative forms of governance is absent or weak, for example, there are no ready-to-use tools and procedures coordinating multilevel or multijurisdictional work or public engagement in decision-making processes.

The analysis further zooms in to the individual (but institutionally embedded) level of practitioners experiencing governance void while they are trying to manage a public dispute, a phenomenon disrupting their routine practices. Public servants are seen as reflexive practitioners

who face events that question the goals and methods of their professional functioning (Yanow 2009; Yanow and Tsoukas 2011). Protests of unexpected intensiveness/scale or character prompt reflection and increase uncertainty. Here, a theoretical category of *surprize* is introduced as a prerequisite of reflection, as it begs the following question: What is not working and why? In contrast to individualist accounts (Schön 1983; Yanow and Tsoukas 2011), I am proposing to perceive surprize as a phenomenon emerging in a collective setting and to define it as a cognitive state caused by a disruption of institutionalized patterns of thinking and behaving deployed by a (public) organization to deal with a specific (social) problem (see also Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). It is an individual-level phenomenon intrinsically embedded in meso-level organizational and institutional structures. The analysis shows how institutionalized patterns of thinking result in the naturalization of protests preventing public managers from reflection, and how power struggles influence the learning process. In this sense, surprise may not occur at all, may be followed by a radical change of perspective in terms of logic and practice; it may also be followed by incremental forms of change, for example, when new practices are being interpreted in old terms. Empirical analysis illustrates all of these options and explains conditions within which they are taking place. The analysis also allows perceiving governance practice in a much richer, fuller human endeavour engaging strong *emotions*. Surprise and the experience of *governance void* may trigger feelings of anxiety, fear, and powerlessness, as those responsible for action discover that what they have thus far thought fails to deliver, while new patterns of thinking and acting are either not there, or remain perplexing and unfamiliar. Thus, fear also needs to be considered as an important category for the analysis.

And eventually analysis zooms out by tracing institutionalization process. Through the lenses of *institutional entrepreneurship* and *institutional work* concepts, it is shown how double-loop learning and, subsequently, institutional change are triggered by individuals. For some individuals, governance voids and top-down institutional pressures create an opportunity to follow their values and to expand their resources. The analysis illustrates how public organization leaders, as well as other actors representing public agencies resort to diverse institutional arrangements and

use bits and pieces from local organizational, political, and community spheres to fill governance voids. I further describe how interactions of diverse actors and their relationships (e.g. low levels of social trust) result in specific patterns and forms of governance institutionalization.

1.2.3 Practice Relevance of Research on Governance: Methodological Considerations

The third part of the book has the form of an epilogue. It offers reflection upon the major challenges for governance and public management studies and, therefore, problems that must be solved by academics and not by practitioners. The challenge is to translate theoretical reflections into policy paradigms, as well as into the consultancy and administrative practice in the public sector. After establishing how processes of learning and governance should follow in order to maximize democracy and effectiveness (first part) and after describing how they follow in practice (second part), I am exploring how social sciences can matter for public administration and public policy. I argue that there are at least three types of research that may be of great relevance for the public administration community (i.e. consultants and practitioners) and for their capacity of good governance. The first type, most classical, is model-driven research. It delivers the description and explanation of conditions enabling and impeding good governance of specific phenomena. The second type of research is extrapolation-oriented case study. It investigates practices in source sites to prepare the ground for disciplined and ingenious (context-sensitive) extrapolation of practices from source to target sites (extrapolation-based design, Barzley 2007). They embrace Hummel's assertion (1990, 1991) that objective analysis of a problem out of context may not meet practitioners' needs as much as a common understanding by those "involved in a problem who must be brought along to constitute a solution" (Flyvbjerg 2001; Hummel 1991, p. 33). The third type is participatory research, assuming that any significant and valuable impact of research requires cooperation with actors functioning within a given environment, the recognition of people's perspectives, values, interests and, last but not least, relations of power.

I argue that all three types of research require practice-based approaches. Grand theories are bound to fail in this respect, as far as they purport to have universal applicability (Bevir 2007). Adopting the governance perspective imposes the acceptance of the view that there exists a structure making social life predictable, at least to some extent. Nevertheless, I do assume that the complexity of the world makes its governability questionable (the so-called ungovernability problem). Therefore, if social research is to be relevant for politics and policy making, it must be contextual (Flyvbjerg 2001; Flyvbjerg et al. 2012) and needs to push for a deliberate process of developing a diverse and flexible repertoire of responses to social problems (Jessop 2011; Verweij and Thompson 2007).

Note

1. Governance and governance turn are contested terms; that is why an important part of the chapter is devoted to clarifying the meaning attached to the term within this book.

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2

Metagovernance, Governance, and Learning

"Governance, governance everywhere", complains one of the scholars when analysing the use of the governance concept in public administration and public management studies (Frederickson 2007). He claims that many of its applications bring nothing more than confusion, as they result in a mere reiteration of perspectives established within the public administration field, only in a different language. Yet another source of confusion is the fact that governance is a term extensively used by both practitioners and academics. The meaning might be similar but the field of reference is different. For practitioners and some academics the term 'governance' designates a specific public management strategy, a toolbox bearing the following label: 'inclusion of external partners in the exercise of public tasks'. For many governance scholars, it is a wider concept describing the coordination of complex and interdependent social relationships. In the first case, the government is the main actor, and as such, it can choose to involve external actors (NGOs, trade unions, citizens) in the decision-making process, or to delegate the provision of public services to them. In the second case, steering and coordination are conceptualized as activities that can be performed by different actors (the government, firms, networks of actors), or by the 'invisible hand' (for instance, in the case of market coordination).

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It seems that both practitioners and some academics would agree that governance—understood as an approach to policymaking and public management—has three distinctive features. First, it uses hybrid practices combining administrative systems with market mechanisms and non-profit organizations. Second, governance is multijurisdictional, because it combines people and institutions across different policy sectors and different levels of government. Third, it encompasses an increasing range and plurality of stakeholders linked together in networks (Bevir 2011, pp. 2–3). Yet some academics understand governance in broader terms and define it as "the formal and informal processes through which society and the economy are steered and problems are solved in accordance with common objectives" (Torfing et al. 2012), "structures and practices involved in coordinating social relations marked by complex reciprocal interdependence" (Jessop 2011), "regimes, laws, rules, judicial decisions, and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable the provision of publicly supported goals and services" (Lynn et al. 2001, p. 7). The coexistence of these two types of definitions often leads to confusion, especially when experts representing diverse backgrounds engage in a discussion about the management of public matters.

In this book, both approaches are used which seems to make things even more complicated. Yet, there is a valid reason to refer to both, that is, the narrow understanding of governance as hybrid, multi-actor, multijurisdictional, and multilevel public management practices (as discussed by Bevir 2011) on the one hand, and a broader definition of governance, understanding it as a way of coordinating complex social relationships. The narrow definition is well established in the academic and professional discourse.[1] It designates a significant change in the perception of the role of government in governing and in the general approach to the management of public issues. However, it remains undertheorized.

It is argued here that a broader governance framework delivers useful tools for the analysis of the narrowly understood governance as an approach to public management. For conceptualizing governance *as steering and coordinating* allows the narrowly understood concept to be broken down in order to identify different levels and kinds of governance, and to link it more clearly to various concepts of learning outlined

in organizational studies. I posit that this kind of approach opens a way towards a more reflexive perception of what government and other public bodies are doing when they are performing the 'governance turn'.

2.1 Governance in the Broad and in the Narrow Sense

Within a broad sense, governance is understood as structures and practices involved in steering and coordinating social relations marked by complex reciprocal interdependence (Jessop 2011). The subject performing governance can be a company, a non-governmental organization, or a public body—in other words, the concept of governance in its broad sense is not restricted to public agencies as the performers of a steering role. The three most commonly used modes of governance are: through exchange (markets), through imperatives (e.g. the hierarchy of a firm, an organization, or a state) and through reflexive self-coordination (e.g. horizontal networking). Some scholars also identify the fourth mode, solidarity, typical of smaller communities and families, which will nevertheless be omitted in this analysis as irrelevant to its subject, that is, public issues and ways in which government and public bodies can manage the public sector through various modes of governance.

Hierarchical (imperative) coordination follows a substantive rationality. It is goal-oriented and prioritizes effective pursuit of successive organizational or policy goals. Governments and public agencies have traditionally had recourse to this governance mode in order to manage public issues. Market exchange is characterized by procedural rationality, which is purely formal, impersonal and oriented towards an efficient allocation of scarce resources to competing objectives. It prioritizes profit maximization. This mode can also be used by the state, for example, in order to create a new market, such as the market for CO_2 emissions. Reflexive self-organization is focused on identifying mutually beneficial joint projects and coordinating them through an ongoing dialogue that lays the foundation for negotiated consent. It is reflexive, because it requires monitoring the implementation of these projects,

and the (re)organization of material, social, and temporal conditions deemed necessary and/or sufficient to implement them (Jessop 2011, p. 113). The latter, self-reflexive governance mode is often equated with 'governance' in the narrow sense and can be exemplified by establishing a ground for negotiated consent, resource sharing, and concerted action to solve complex social problems while involving various stakeholders. The government or another public agency can resort to this mode by assuming the role of network organizer (Fig. 2.1).

If we use governance modes—hierarchy, markets, and networks—as building blocks, we can analyse the governance turn as a process in which public administration expands the traditional repertoire of coordination

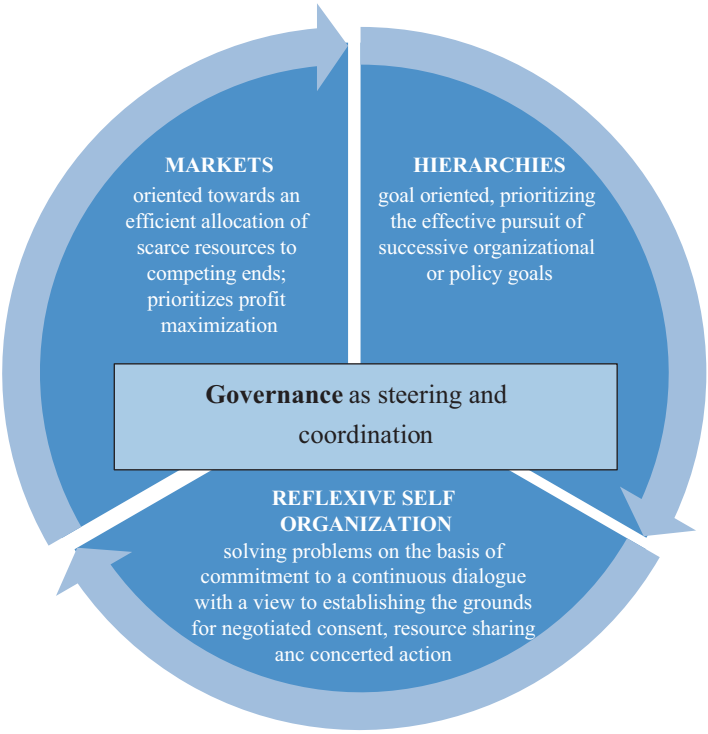

Fig. 2.1 Governance in the broad sense. (Source: Own design based on Jessop (2011))

practices from mainly hierarchical (as observed in the early 1980s) to practices combining all three modes in different proportions. This conceptualization seems to be valid, especially when looking at the way narrowly understood governance is defined and operationalized in research. First, the definition of narrowly understood governance usually covers hybrid practices (combining hierarchies with markets and networks) together with multi-actor, multijurisdictional, and multilevel public management practices. Second, when operationalized in the research conducted in the context of European and North American countries 'governance turn' is exemplified by (a) a widespread adoption of New Public Management and public-private partnerships, (b) the involvement of local associations, interest groups, and private actors in policy partnerships, and (c) the introduction of new forms of citizen involvement (Denters and Rose 2005; Denters 2011; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013; Morgan and Cook 2014). The first one entails coordinating pursuant to the market or quasi-market logics, while the latter two mean introducing mechanisms of reflexive self-organization (Fig. 2.2).

Governance modes deliver a formal category according to which governance as a phenomenon can be analysed. On the contrary to hardly distinguishable categories like New Public Governance, collaborative governance, participatory governance, public governance, and the like a formal distinction based on modes coherently orders the phenomenon of governance and offers a venue to explore this complex phenomenon. It seems to be especially important because the complexity of governance phenomenon has at least two dimensions: in terms of governance modes and in terms of levels. If we agree that governance involves hybrid practices, a reflection is needed on what are the components of the hybrid and how to switch between them, or combine them. The latter, level-based dimension, builds a link to the issues of learning.

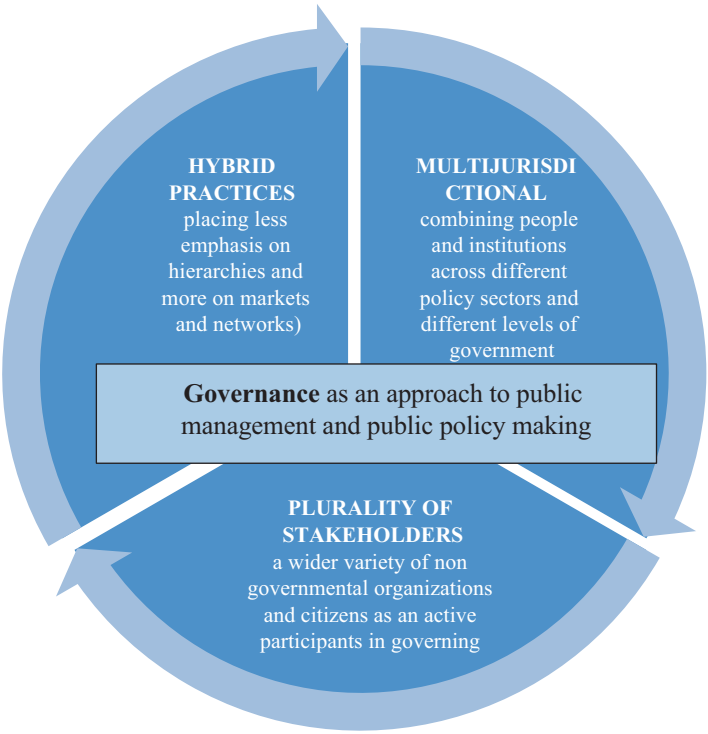

Fig. 2.2 Governance in the narrow sense. (Source: Own design based on Bevir (2011))

2.2 Governance and Learning

A number of phenomena are regarded as triggers of the governance turn, namely steering problems, complexity, uncertainty and legitimacy deficits linked to the growing gap between government and society (Kooiman 1993; Peters 1996; Klijn et al. 2012). Traditional coordination, that is, bureaucracy does not allow the government to gather and process information effectively with a view to taking effective action in highly complex and uncertain environments. These problems have arguably forced governments to explore new management patterns. Public administration scholars tend to describe the search for solutions as a linear process within

which bureaucratic, hierarchical coordination was first replaced by market-oriented and private sector-inspired managerialist approaches, such as New Public Management (NPM), which was subsequently traded for New Public Governance (NPG), or other more participatory governance methods such as participatory governance, collaborative governance, and so on (Sørensen and Torfing 2015; Osborne 2006, 2010; Ansell and Torfing 2014). Disappointment with hierarchical coordination and its failure, followed by the imperfection of NPM convinced scholars and policy-makers to perceive self-reflexive governance as a 'third way'. This linear description seems to validly describe the subsequent dominance of diverse paradigms (or passing fads) in public management discourse of academic and professional circles.

Yet discussing market-based paradigms like NPM and network-based paradigms like NPG (Sørensen and Torfing 2015) as subsequent, linearly ordered responses to the failures of the hierarchical governance mode facilitates the 'either-or' perceptions. The drawback of this approach is that it tends to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Bureaucracy or New Public Management may be impuissant when it comes to solving complex social problems, but this does not mean that we do not need them any more (Ansell 2011; Sørensen and Torfing 2015). Linear thinking suggests that there must be an optimum way in which to manage public issues; it is simply yet to be found, or it has been found, only we are not trying hard enough to implement it. Being where we are, disappointed with bureaucracy and New Public Management, we believe that well-performed governance (narrowly defined) will rescue us. We only need to master it.

Learning how best to implement collaborative public administration paradigms like New Public Governance is undoubtedly important. However, it is just as important to be able to step aside and critically reflect on whether, in a given situation, it would not be better to 'revert' to traditional ways of hierarchical governing, or to private sector-inspired tools, such as performance measurement. Or, another possibility is to use all three, or only two modes, adapting proportions to the situation. This is where thinking in terms of *forms* and *levels* becomes useful. One can learn how to improve a specific governance mode (form), how to better use performance management in public services in order to increase the effectiveness of service delivery and correct its deficiencies as they become

apparent. But one can also learn when it is better to leave one mode for another. Each governance mode will lead to a specific type of failure; none of them is a golden cure (see Table 2.1).

How can we identify the most appropriate mode for a given situation? The ability to answer this question is assumed to be inherent in good (effective) governance. Jessop argues that good governance requires

> cultivating the capacity to reflect on, and rebalance, the mix among modes in response to changes in the challenges and/or opportunities that exist at the interface of market, state and civil society. Governing in modern society requires an interactive perspective concerned to balance social interests and facilitate the interaction of actors and systems through self-organization, co-arrangements, or more interventionist forms of organization. (Jessop 2011, p. 114)

If we, therefore, embrace the broader understanding of governance when thinking about governance as an approach to public management,

Table 2.1 Governance modes and their failures

	Mode		
Characteristics	Hierarchy	Market	Self-reflexive organization
Rationality	Substantial	Procedural	Substantial & procedural
Stylized mode of calculation	*Homo hierarchicus*	*Homo economicus*	*Homo politicus*
Criterion of success	Effective goal attainment	Efficient allocation of resources	Negotiated consent
Primary criterion of failure (can be corrected within the logic)	Ineffectiveness	Economic inefficiency	Noise, talking shop
Secondary criterion of failure (cannot be corrected outside of the logic)	Bureaucratism, red tape (e.g. excessive procedures)	Market inadequacies (e.g. negative externalities, information failure)	Distorted communication (e.g. through power asymmetries)

Source: Jessop (2011, p. 114)

we must recognize the existence of two levels of governance. This in turn, entails a smooth connection to learning: learning to master a particular governance mode (e.g. hierarchy) and learning to reflect on governance modes in order to choose the most suitable in a given situation. The first is about learning from experience and following a single way of thinking without questioning its appropriateness. The second is about the ability to critically reflect on assumptions behind each of the modes and being able to choose between them.

Discussions around 'governance turn' tend to focus on the network-based, collaborative, and participatory nature of new approaches to public management. Hence public agencies are expected to learn how to organize collaborations and govern through networks. Yet the learning does not take place in the vacuum. The new paradigm is layered upon the existing one (hierarchical and market-based). In this sense, learning of the new governance mode requires questioning of the old and embracing the new. Moreover, the definition of governance includes hybrid practices. It means the public agencies along with learning of a new network-based mode need to learn how and when to replace it with alternative approaches (hierarchies or markets).

These two levels of governance learning—learning how to use a single mode or how to change between the modes—correspond to theoretical concepts of learning developed within organizational theory. Learning of a specific governance mode can be based on experience and on the consequences of previously taken actions. It is called single-loop learning (Argyris and Schon 1978) and it allows one to refine a practice, based on a specific logic without questioning the goal or the logic itself. It is similar to exploitative learning, which uses existing knowledge and resources to reap value from what is already known (March 1991). Although they both require reflection on practices, they do not involve in-depth changes to the logic of action or to the definition of the problem.

A change in the logic and in the definition is possible within double-loop and explorative learning. Double-loop learning questions the appropriateness of previous behaviour, together with the underlying set of assumptions, values, and risks. An organization employing double-loop learning is reflexive and able to redefine itself and the problem that it is

striving to solve. It develops institutions enabling continuous learning. In other words, it learns how to organize learning.

The concept of double-loop and exploratory learning is consistent with the idea that a public body needs to choose between modes of governance or, in fact, between different logics of defining and solving problems. In order to capture the difference between those two levels of learning in the context of governance, I introduce the theoretical concept of *metagovernance* (Jessop 2011). The prefix 'meta' refers to the reflection on or the analysis of governance, which, analogous to learning, has two levels. This is why metagovernance is understood as an undertaking to (level one) improve specific modes of governance (e.g. changing the composition of networks or redesigning markets), and (level two) to recompose proportions of governance modes used within a given field.[2] By definition, metagovernance requires reflexivity—the capacity to detach from one's practices and make them the subject of critical inquiry (Table 2.2).

In the analysis, where the notion of learning plays a central role, it is crucial to distinguish activities and practices from reflection on activities and practices connected with interpretation, drawing of conclusions and planning. If the governance turn and (narrowly defined) governance are perceived within this framework, we can argue as follows: Practising governance requires public administration (a) to learn how to use the self-reflexive, network-based mode of governing that is, how to organize spaces for dialogue about problems and solutions, engaging a wide range of stakeholders; how to construct networks, also within its own structures; how to break down task-oriented silos structure and create problem-oriented horizontal structures and so on and (b) to learn how to choose among different governance modes and—as the process unfolds and failures inevitably emerge—correct the imperfections of each mode with the use of another. The first part (a) captures a portion of the definition bearing on the multijurisdictional and multilevel nature of governance, whereas the latter part (b) refers to the hybrid character of governance practices. Within this framework, governance is necessarily linked to learning, because learning enables one to adapt to emerging environmental challenges. It is evolutionary learning for public goals (Ansell 2011). Instead of the linear emergence of subsequent public administration paradigms (Sørensen and Torfing 2015), it is a reflexive, spiral-like process of

Table 2.2 Levels of governance versus levels of learning

	Governance practice	Learning	Reflection on governance
Level 1	Attempts to improve a specific governance mode	Refining practice based on a specific logic without questioning the goal or the logic itself Using experiential knowledge and resources to benefit from what is already known	Reflection on a given governance mode within its own frames, directed at improving practice without attempts to change its logic (e.g. refining or adding new legal procedures, redesigning markets, changing composition of networks)
		Examples of related concepts: Single-loop learning (Argyris and Schon 1978), exploitative learning (March 1991)	Examples of related concepts: Second-order governance, first order metagovernance (Kooiman 1993; Jessop 2011), first and second-order change (Hall 1993)
Level 2	Attempts to change proportions of governance modes applied in a given field	Questioning the appropriateness of previous behaviour, together with its underlying assumptions, values and risks	Reflection on the applicability of governance modes to a specific situation and recomposition of governance modes in response to emerging failures
		Examples of related concepts: Double-loop learning (Argyris and Schon 1978), explorative learning (March 1991)	Examples of related concepts: Third-order governance, second-order metagovernance (Kooiman 1993; Jessop 2011), third-order change, social learning (Hall 1993)

reflection and action, where different logics are interchangeably used in order to find most suitable answers to current problems.

But who decides what is best for whom, and what the problem is in the first place? These considerations will be explored in the next section.

2.3 Uncertainty and Lack of Consensus over Values

Metagovernance, in particular when understood as efforts to recompose proportions of various forms of governance, presents a huge challenge to governing bodies and non-governmental actors. It entails an innovative attitude of decision-makers in public administration. Public officials should be committed to performing a task in a new way, for example, to developing budgets in cooperation with external stakeholders (participatory budgeting). They should be creative, willing to consider the use of tools designed for solving specific problems in different situations and sectors, for example, exercise design thinking when developing a public service. They should consider experimenting with their own role: 'Am I a representative of the public with a mandate to take decisions? Or shall I limit my responsibility to the role of facilitator in the process of decision-making in which a wide range of actors from different sectors are involved?'

The implementation of inventions always involves—at least to a certain extent—experimenting, exploring, and testing hypotheses (Browne and Wildavsky 1983; Sabel and Zeitlin 2008), but it does not mean that 'reflexive' bureaucrats, administrators, and local government representatives are expected to constantly innovate. Prescriptively speaking, there is also a need for incremental change, exploitative learning (March 1991; Schreyögg et al. 2011), and learning based on feedback instead of constant feed-forward thinking (Crossan et al. 1999). There are fields where elasticity and incessantly innovative, participatory approach are not a necessity—worse still, they could even result in wasting resources (e.g. time, money, and social capital) through the endless process of reinventing the wheel.

Drawing inspiration from complexity (Stacey 1993; Ansell and Gayer 2016) and Science Technology Society literature (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993; Pielke 2007), I suggest that there are two critical conditions whose simultaneous appearance requires innovative approaches to governance engaging multiple stakeholders, namely lack of consensus over values and uncertainty, which is due to the great complexity of the problem at hand (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Level of uncertainty and consensus over values as criteria for determining whether to engage into collective and critical reflection on governance

	Low levels of uncertainty and consensus over values and governance goals	High uncertainty and lack of consensus over values and governance goals
Use of existing knowledge/use of old procedures	Application of old procedures as the most effective method of solving problems	Threat of a lock-in
Engaging a wide range of stakeholders—acquiring new knowledge/ designing new procedures	Waste of resources and potential decision paralysis	Use of an innovative and experimental approach as a most effective way of dealing with problems

These factors are symptoms of a situation in which no consensus has been reached over the desired outcomes of actions (what is valued as an outcome) and more than one outcome is consistent with expectations (uncertainty). This definition of uncertainty encompasses such understanding of the terms of ignorance, risk, and (uncertain) measurement and estimation. People make decisions in an effort to manage uncertainty, yet the presence of uncertainty both complicates and facilitates reaching political consensus (Pielke 2007, p. 55). In many situations, uncertainty can be reduced (e.g. through the acquisition of new knowledge). Characteristics of the situation where collective and critical reflection over governance is desirable do, in fact, match the definition of a wicked problem, featuring substantial interdependencies among multiple systems and actors, have redistributive implications for entrenched interests (Rayner 2003) and create high levels of uncertainty and instability within socio-political systems.

A high level of uncertainty and the absence of consensus over values are symptomatic of situations where participatory and reflexive approaches to governance are needed for two reasons. On the one hand, because democracy is about making sure that diverse interests and values are represented and have a chance of entering the bargaining process and, on the other hand, because new and diverse types of knowledge need to be generated in order to solve the problem. In this sense, participation is per-

ceived as having democratic qualities and as a tool enhancing the effectiveness and resilience of a solution, as a product that is an amalgam of different kinds of knowledge (experts' knowledge, users' knowledge, bureaucrats' knowledge, etc.). In such cases, governance becomes a learning process where actors learn not only individually through reflecting on their own experiences and values, but they also intentionally learn together with others. This shift from individual reflective learning to deliberative, joint work brings about results that, initially, nobody had in mind (Forester 2018).

These two dimensions (uncertainty and consensus over values) allow us to address concerns about both the means and the ends of governance, and to identify situations where the use of networks as the mode of governance should prevail over, but not necessarily eliminate other modes, for instance hierarchical or market governance. In such situations, solutions to a problem should emerge from conflicting voices, which means that their participants do not need to agree on goals (due to differences in value systems), but must be of the same mind when it comes to action (e.g. do the same and think differently). Agreement over goals and outcomes may sometimes prove impossible, because many conflicts are rooted in non-negotiable issues, such as deeply held values (Forester 2012). In the face of high complexity and uncertainty about the results of actions, the prevailing method of governance should not eliminate the possibility of altering future strategies but, instead, allow for the rectification of insufficiencies characteristic of each mode of governance (Verweij and Thompson 2007; Jessop 2011). Paying heed to a variety of voices opens access to rich, local knowledge, which together with maintaining a minimum level of diversity in the modes of governance, is conducive to effectively reducing uncertainty. The ambiguity of the decision-making context is seen here as "generative and not paralyzing, probing and reframing options rather than presuming relatively uninformed problem definitions" (Forrester 2012, p. 2).

2.4 From an Idealized Model to a Practice-Based Description

I argue here that considerations over metagovernance and learning are normative and, to a certain extent, prescriptive tools prompting reflection on 'how things should work' that is, on values (inclusiveness, effectiveness) which are strived for in governance processes, and on (participatory, reflexive) methods of their realization. Knowing what we want and how we want to achieve it is the first step forward.

Despite taking into account the complexity and the social construction of reality, these considerations remain models guided by scientific logic and rationality (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011). They should not be treated as a description of *how it really works in practice*, because these models are focused on a selected management pattern in its ideal form and they abstract away from the social context within which the pattern emerges.

Those using models as ready-to-wear plans for implementing governance will inevitably discover that 'reality' does not listen (Forester 2018). When trying to implement governance models, we need knowledge about on-the-ground governance and learning practices. These two types of knowledge, that is, those based on rules and those based on the context (Flyvbjerg 2006) have a potential to lead to context-sensitive implementation of new governance patterns.

Building a framework based on observation of practice and providing context-based knowledge is a primary goal of this book. The focus is on how and why practitioners implement new governance modes and how the process of implementation is penetrated by institutions. Further on, the concept of governance is understood narrowly, as an approach to public management and policymaking. While researching public disputes I am specifically focusing on how public administration practitioners learn to collaborate with external actors and how they organize multijurisdictional and multilevel collaborations within public administration in response to external pressures. In this sense, my approach is selective. The research presented in the following chapters of the book illustrates an adaptive and unplanned process of learning of a new, network-based governance mode, the process which I call governance learning. It took place through incremental changes in hierarchical and/or quasi-market-based logics of gover-

nance (single-loop) and then through the questioning of the latter two. In all cases, the process was a rather unplanned ad hoc, adaptive activity. If good governance means the ability to reflect and rebalance diverse governance modes, it would require public agencies to *institutionalize reflection and learning*. Observation of a spontaneous learning process and distinguishing its critical moments delivers important knowledge for those who not only want to understand the phenomenon of institutional change and learning but also for those who want to effectively manage these processes.

Notes

1. See for example Oxford Handbook of Governance (2012) or Sage Handbook of Governance (2011), where most of the entries conceptualize governance as a specific approach to public policy and public management ('and' is lacking).
2. In the literature, the former is sometimes called second-order governance, or the first order of metagovernance, and the latter is referred to as the third-order governance, second-order metagovernance, or collaboration (Kooiman 1993; Jessop 2011, see Table 2.2).

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3

Governance Learning from an Institutional Perspective

In the previous chapter I argue that, ideally speaking, the governance turn implies learning on two levels: on the level of mastering a given governance mode and on the meta-level of mastering the ability to question the given mode in order to test how to do things differently, for example use another governance mode or blend several governance modes. But how do the processes of governance and learning look in practice, as opposed to the ideal type? The question seems to be relevant, for the governance turn means change in the manner in which public issues are managed and every change is embedded in, and at least partially conditioned by the prior order. The institutional perspective enables us to capture these influences through defining institutions as cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour (Scott 1995, p. 33). The 'governance turn' involves changes in all three areas: cognitive, normative, and regulatory. Social actors functioning within public administration need to change their ways of thinking, reconfigure norms and values underlying decision-making processes, and adopt to the evolving formal (law) and informal rules (routines, habits) that guide their actions. What is more, they are expected to *institutionalize reflection and learning* in order to be able to question both long existing and emerging structures. Perceiving the latter

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challenge through the lens of the institutional theory reveals the core of the problem: given that, as behavioural patterns and cognitive mechanisms, institutions guarantee a significant degree of stability in social life, is it possible to design an institution that would systematically question its own assumptions?

Let us leave this paradox aside for the time being and focus on interpreting the governance turn through the prism of the institutional theory framework. My approach to researching the governance turn is inspired by Alvin Gouldner's research on patterns of industrial bureaucracy (1954). The question guiding an investigation is how new institutional forms are introduced and what happens when they collide with the prior institutional order. In his seminal work, Gouldner illustrates how organization members resist attempts to introduce new management procedures resting on a different logic, different norms and values and how, as a result, a range of hybrids is generated. These hybrids are a mixture of elements of new and old arrangements, blended together in ways that are unexpected, or even undesirable from the point of view of the initiator of changes. The most dangerous hybrid, at least from the perspective of well-intentioned designers trying to introduce industrial bureaucracy, is mock bureaucracy, that is, an arrangement in which formally introduced rules are tinkered with, eventually becoming nothing more than a façade.

An approach focusing on the micro level of public management practices and on organizational responses to changes emerging within the institutional environment may prove to be an answer to Rhodes' critical assessment of structural approaches to governance. Rhodes perceives the structural approaches as incapable of explaining how structures are modified or maintained by consciously acting individuals (2012). I posit that we ought to regard institutions as inhabited by people doing things together (Scully and Creed 1997; Hallet and Ventresca 2006), and therefore as maintained and changed by people. On the one hand, people are embedded in existing institutional structures, which guide their thinking and behaviour, and on the other hand, they are able to perform their agency and undertake purposive actions aimed at change. This intertwined relationship between structure and agency is referred to as the paradox of embedded agency (Seo and Creed 2002; Zietsma and Lawrence 2010), or as the process of structuration (Giddens 1979). Following Hallet and

Ventresca, I resort to the institutional perspective inspired by symbolic interactionism, where "institutions provide the raw materials and guidelines for social interactions and, on the other hand, the meanings of institutions are constructed and propelled forward by social interactions" (2006, p. 213).

Summarizing the above considerations, the governance turn is perceived here as a fine opportunity to ask questions about the micro foundation of political behaviour within institutions and the linkage between individuals and institutions (Peters 2011). By getting closer to actors and actions, we can capture both structural and constructivist moments, observe the merging of agency and structure (Bourdieu 1990, p. 122; Hallett and Ventresca 2006). I concur with Rhodes' call for "bringing people back into governance studies" (2012, p. 33), but contrary to his proposal to focus on the practices of a group of people and on the unintended consequences of their actions (Bevir and Rhodes 2010; Rhodes 2012), I argue that it is useful to keep the structure metaphor in the theoretical framework.

3.1 Linking Individuals and Institutions

In order to investigate linkages between actors and institutions, the inquiry focuses on particular public agencies of local government and on specific public disputes, where original institutions are enacted and changed in the processes of social interactions. In this sense, analysis looks at actors' embeddedness within a wider institutional system and at the practices within which the actors are either maintaining the system or trying to change it. The reconstruction of interactions between individuals and institutions is provided by Coleman's logic of explanation. It looks at (1) the influence of macro-level institutions on the meso (organizational) and micro (individual) levels, (2) interactions on the micro level, where macro-influences are socially negotiated and transformed, and (3) mechanisms that transform individual phenomena into meso- and macro-level outcomes (Coleman 1990; Gilardi and Radaelli 2012).[1] The analysis presented below is a 'journey' through subsequent levels of analysis, in an attempt to link macro processes with their local manifestations. The framework presented below offers a tool for the interpretation of empirical data discussed in the subsequent chapter. It also presents a scaf-

fold, which is revised and expanded on the basis of observations undertaken in situ (Chap. 8).

From Macro to Meso and Micro Research suggests that no Western or Central Eastern Europe country has dodged the governance turn. As already mentioned in Chap. 1 the following three major changes have been observed, in stark contrast with the situation of the early 1980s: (1) a widespread adoption of New Public Management and public-private partnerships, (2) the involvement of organized local associations, interest groups, and private actors in policy partnerships, (3) the introduction of new forms of citizen involvement (Denters 2011).

The simultaneous co-evolution of the above changes in different European countries suggests that the diffusion of governance can be perceived as a process of institutional isomorphism, which is evidenced by the homogenization of public administration structures and governance-enabling practices (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In the institutional approach, macro-level factors are identified as influencing change on the meso and micro level; these are the three types of institutional pressures towards isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive pressures originate mainly from legal sources. Mimetic pressures are present in uncertain situations and evidenced by copying practices that have proven successful. Normative pressures derive from approaches and orientations of professional groups. Accordingly, governance learning can take place through adaptation to legal changes, the observation of other public agencies implementing governance practices, the intake of elected and nominated public officials educated within the new tradition of governance, communication in professional circles, or through the ongoing education of 'old' officials (in the form of training and workshops).

Interactions at the Micro Level in the Context of an Organization and the Organizational Field The explanation based on Powell and DiMaggio's framework is relevant mainly for the macro and meso levels, setting aside the micro level of individual practices and perceptions. It also takes no account of the process of transforming the micro level answers into meso- and macro-level structures, which is of key importance for the analysis of organizational

learning processes. Therefore, I supplement it with institutional approaches focusing on the role of actors in the processes of institutional change (e.g. Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Halgrave and Van de Ven 2006; Hallet and Ventresca 2006). These approaches emphasize that on the micro level, individuals interact with each other and it is in the course of interactions that institutions can not only be redefined, but created or destroyed. Practices from the individual level transform institutional structures at the meso and macro level. Considered within this framework, a public organization becomes an arena on which old and new ways of doing things meet. It is a platform on which micro, meso and macro level engage in interplay. In the course of interactions, individuals (local politicians, bureaucrats, and external actors) create, transform, maintain, and disrupt institutions.

From Micro to Meso (and Macro) Learning, as a process of cognitive and behavioural change, is simultaneously conditioned by institutions and brings about the creation of new institutions. In this sense, new institutions and the process of learning are path-dependent: they are embedded in old structures (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006) and influenced by past decisions, limiting the scope of choices accessible to organizational actors (Schreyögg et al. 2011). New institutions are also to be seen as the reflection of power struggles within organizations, which, as suggested by Scott, can be perceived as "opportunistic collections of divergent interests" (1967, p. 23, see also Binder 2007).

3.2 Public Dispute as a Trigger of Governance Learning

In order to observe the governance turn in practice, I have focused on two aspects of the phenomenon: firstly, on the involvement of organized local associations, interest groups, and private actors in policy partnerships, and secondly, on changes in local public administration behaviour, including new forms of citizen involvement. In order to capture the tension between old and new practices, I have decided to research public disputes in which local government and public administration officials are faced with the

pressure of implementing relatively new governance practices based on the participatory logic. Public disputes are, in a sense, natural experiments (Hammersley and Atkinson 1992) delivering an insight into day-to-day practices. A conflict that challenges the goals and/or means of public management may lead to a temporary breakdown of the default setting, a behaviour that has long been taken for granted, and, doing so, may shed light on the logic behind it (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011). Moreover, it affords an opportunity to observe strategic, purposive responses, to trace their links to existing institutions and to observe how these responses diverge from the existing patterns and create alternatives. In this sense, public dispute offers a glimpse into the structural and constructivist moments of the governance practice (Hallet and Ventresca 2006).

3.3 Institutional Context of Governance. An Empirical Analysis of Governance Practice

To a certain extent, the evolution of public management patterns in CEE countries in general, and in Poland in particular, has followed a path that is similar to the path of Western countries, where New Public Management (NPM) was hailed as an answer to the failures of hierarchical and bureaucratic approaches (the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s); subsequently, New Public Governance (NPG) was increasingly perceived as a third way and an answer to the imperfections of both hierarchical and market-oriented patterns of rule. Until 1989, public administration in CEE countries was operated under the central planning system, that is, a socialist version of the traditional government or Public Administration (PA) marked by hierarchical resource allocation, bureaucratic rule over policy making and reliance on rigid administrative guidelines and budgets in policy implementation (Österle 2010). During the post-communist transition, public administration came under growing pressure to adopt patterns of New Public Management (Kordasiewicz and Sadura 2017). Just as in other countries, the private sector became the key reference model for public administration. The focus on management, performance, evaluation, and cost-effectiveness

analyses often led to the introduction of market-type mechanisms, that is, recourse to private contractors and the delegation of public services (Österle 2010; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). These new trends became visible both in the area of corporate governance (Dunn 2004) and public administration (Verdery 2003, 1996). However, the situation started changing at the beginning of the second decade of the post-communist transformation. The international organizations, such as the World Bank or the European Union, which previously insisted on the economic effectiveness of public services, currently tend to promote "good governance", "governance" (Peters and Pierre 1998; Greasley and Stoker 2008), New Public Governance (Osborne 2010), or "collaborative governance" (Ansell and Gash 2008). Many formal institutions enabling public participation and consultation in decision-making have been created, including access to public information, citizens' right to participate in environmental impact assessments and spatial planning. Importantly, changes involving participatory institutions were accelerated in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in anticipation of their accession to the EU, which took place in 2004.

A significant difference when compared with Western countries is connected with the fact that the resources at the disposal of local business are more limited, as is the market of suppliers of contracted out services. There is a relative weakness of non governmental organizations and civic engagement (Swieniewicz 2008; Lewicka-Strzałecka 2006; Denters 2011, p. 315). Some researchers hypothesize that the governance turn has created an opportunity for the democratization of public management, fostering public participation in decision-making processes that enables management tailored to specific social needs (Lewenstein 2010). Others warn that the relative financial weakness of local governments and their dramatic need for resources are strengthening the position of businesses in local politics. Some commentators refer to these changes as the "development of private governance" (Dingwerth 2008). In some cases, the development of networks and partnerships are more likely to pose a threat to democracy than to strengthen it.

Thus far, research on Polish governance and public management patterns tends to point to the latter kind of developments. According to analyses based on statistical data, official documents and interviews with

elected officials, civil service bureaucrats, and NGO representatives, public participation procedures often lead to "imposing particular development goals by local administration or by interests groups abusing their organizational or communication advantages" (Gąciarz and Bartkowski 2012, p. 58, see also Bober et al. 2013). It is argued that dialogue institutions are a 'foreign body' to the tissue of Polish local governance arrangements (Spławski and Zybertowicz 2005).

In 2002, a presidential model was introduced into the local government system. Citizens' control over the executive was significantly limited to acts of negative democracy and ex post control (Bober et al. 2013). Researchers conclude: "Polish institutional order does not favour civic engagement or the presence of citizens within the public sphere. Citizens are rather pushed out of it. If they do step into the public sphere, they are usually the clients of the public administration bodies, representatives of individual or corporate interests" (Bober et al. 2013, p. 37).

Researchers analysing governance patterns in local units of public administration (delegation of educational services and care services for the elderly) have identified a common pattern across these sectors, namely the predominance of Public Administration and New Public Management elements with a hint of the New Public Governance rhetoric (Kordasiewicz and Sadura 2017, p. 4).

Yet, most of these circumstances and developments are not unique to CEE countries. Many local governments are in desperate need of resources. The strengthening of the executive is observed in many countries as well. In some cases, it is accomplished through reinforcing the position of collegial executive leadership (the UK, Sweden), whereas other countries like Germany, the US, France have relied more on strong mayoral leadership (Denters 2011). Such institutional context may prove ineffective in enhancing participatory strategies in public management.

Public disputes are treated here as an opportunity to take a glimpse into the way bureaucrats act, think, and learn (Freeman 2008). They have been selected as an object of inquiry because they are instances of public administration experiencing direct pressure to involve diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. Stakeholders demand that they be included, question the manner in which public matters are managed, and

challenge the goals of governance. Theoretically speaking, they demand that public agency enact problem-solving governance, organize dialogue where all parties can express their preferences, and provide a space in which they could exchange their knowledge in response to a given problem. The public demand that these values and knowledge be somehow included in solutions devised to address a given policy dilemma. This kind of situation provides an insight into default responses to protests, the impact, if any, of environmental pressures on these responses, and the manner in which these responses are negotiated within an organization. Through observing the development of this process over time, we can comprehend the extent to which new modes of governance are institutionalized, and the process of their institutionalization itself.

For the sake of the research presented in this book I have adopted Susskind's definition of public dispute, as it tallies fairly well with the governance phenomenon. Susskind defines public dispute as a conflict "involving governmental entities and other parties (individual citizens, business firms, organizations, etc.) over policy priorities, standards, or resources they hope to share" (Susskind 2000, p. 130). It is, therefore, about involving multiple and diverse stakeholders, which is consistent with the plurality of stakeholders in governance, about negotiating the goals and means of policy making, which is in tune with the discussion about the selection of governance modes and hybridity, and it is about public issues and the distribution of resources. The third important feature of governance is multijurisdictionality, combining people and institutions across different policy sectors and different levels of government (Bevir 2011, pp. 2–3). In order to capture the latter, I have chosen examples of disputes including varying levels of complexity as far as the level of government is concerned (see Chap. 2).

Given that an important feature of governance is multijurisdictionality (Bevir 2011), understood as combining people and institutions across different policy sectors and different levels of government, the selected cases capture varying degrees of complexity in terms of the level of government and the involvement of diverse public agencies. The higher the level the more actors are involved and the more coordination is necessary. In Table 3.1, cases are classified according to the level of government at which major decisions regarding the subject of the dispute are taken.

Table 3.1 Subject of the public dispute and local government levels involved

	Level of local government		
Case	Municipality—headed by the Mayor	Province/city—headed by the Starost (province) or by the President (city)	Region—headed by the Marshal
Closing of rural schools	**X**		
Mart modernization	X	**X**	
Waste water treatment plant modernization	X	**X**	
Building of anti-flood facilities	X	X	**X**

X involved and formally empowered to decide; X involved

Research is focused on public dispute perceived as interaction between various types of actors. First, representatives of different levels of state administration: from national, to regional, province, and district/municipality level. Among them, there are elected officials (politicians) and employees of public administration bodies representing different levels of the organizational structure: from top management positions to street-level bureaucrats. The second group is formed by investors, in many cases publicly owned companies responsible, inter alia, for the technical design of a project, public communication about the project and so on. There are representatives of non-governmental associations, informal groups that come into being during protests, and individual citizens. All of these actors create new and enact existing institutions, while negotiating their meaning through interactions.

In order to capture the emergence of the process of institutional change and learning, I have adopted the extended case method (Burawoy 1998; Wadham and Warren 2014). This choice was dictated by several factors: the method is sensitive to the process of macro-meso-micro transitions; involves the historical, political and social context; and has semi-inductive design, that is, builds research on a pre-existing theory with a view to

modifying it on the basis of empirical research. All of the above fit the research purposes of exploring the institutional conditions of the learning process. I departed from organizational learning and institutional theory as analytical tools organizing data collection and interpretation. Through an iterative process of data analysis and theoretical considerations, I elaborate upon pre-existing theories to build a conceptual framework of local governance learning and related institutional change.

Data Sources All cases draw on three main sources of data, namely (1) archival sources: official documents (administrative decisions, complaints filed in courts, local government resolutions, open letters, organizational documents, minutes from meetings of district and provincial councils), media reports (newspaper and TV releases, interviews), the Internet (webpages run by investors, protesters, public agencies); (2) interviews with key actors; (3) observation (of public meetings, protests, open days, etc.) The set of research methods applied includes content analysis, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. The process of data collection was organized in three phases: (1) retrospective data collection that coincided with the early days of the decision-making process; (2) field work (taking place during protests, when the majority of data was collected through interviews, observation, etc.); (3) retrospective data collection once the main phase of protests was over (and when the bulk of the systematic analysis was carried out).

A more detailed description of the research process of each case study is presented in the Annex.

Note

1. Another and possibly even more appropriate approach would involve perceiving actors and organizations as embedded in different fields, in configurations resembling Russian dolls (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, also see Chap. 8).

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4

How Framing Transforms Governance: Public Dispute over the Closure of Three Small Schools in a Rural Community

Why don't we turn the gymnasium, into a supermarket, the eating areas and part of the school building into a hotel? We could group the children into remaining areas of the building. This will make the school profitable and self-sufficient!
School principal, minutes of the Municipality Council Meeting, February 2012

4.1 Introduction

The case illustrates a phenomenon that, theoretically speaking, stands at the core of the governance turn, that is, the inclusion of non-governmental actors in policy making and implementation (in this case, the provision of education services) in order to gain more flexibility and responsiveness towards the needs of individuals and local groups (Bellamy and Palambo 2010). Yet, in practice, the decision-making process leading to the handing over of schools to a non-governmental actor was an example of a hierarchical style of policy execution, and an act of the top-down exercise of power. Economic considerations were the sole basis on which the problem was defined and solved.

M. Strumińska-Kutra, *Democratizing Public Management*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74591-6_4

In the interpretation that follows, emphasis is put on two phenomena. The first is the *framing of governance* practices involving external stakeholders. In the analysis of in-depth interviews, minutes of Council meetings, and newspaper articles, three frames can be distinguished: a legalist frame organizing the perception of participation around legal rules and procedures, a managerialist frame using private sector-inspired rhetoric, and a frame of representative democracy attributing responsibility for decision-making and problem solving to elected officials and councillors. These frames are rooted in a wider institutional context and, together, justify the exclusion of external stakeholders from the dialogue on the definition of the problem and possible solutions. The second phenomenon highlighted by the analysis is that of the *dynamics of the decision-making process*. It is shown how, with the use of abovementioned frames, decision-makers systematically exclude dissenting voices, thus turning the decision-making process into a linear procedure where everything is known and planned beforehand. Within this process, there is no place for reflection and governance learning—neither for public officials nor for municipality councillors nor for external actors, such as the local community, teachers, principals, or parents.

4.2 Description of Events

Until 1989, all education was organized and provided by state-run public institutions. After the political transformation, non-public schools were established; following the subsequently introduced decentralization and educational reform, upper secondary schools were delegated to county-level administration, while elementary schools and lower-secondary schools were delegated to municipality-level administration. Local government units were provided with subsidies originally designed to cover all of their educational spending, while also granting a certain amount of freedom in the planning of education budgets, as well as rights to seek additional financing for education from their own income stream (Kordasiewicz and Sadura 2017). The value of the subsidy is calculated based on the decline in the number of students on roll from the beginning of 2000 resulting from the demographic decline. Simultaneously, a significant part of educational spending is determined by the 1982

'Teacher's Charter', a document setting out relatively favourable employment conditions for teachers compared to other professionals whose contracts are regulated by the general Labour Code. As a result, the gap between the amount of subsidy and the actual educational costs incurred by local government units has steadily grown wider. It proved particularly costly to maintain a large number of small schools (e.g. in rural areas). In 2011, the subsidy covered on average 88% of ongoing expenses related to running primary and lower-secondary schools and incurred by municipalities. It should be noted at this point that education is the major cost item in their budgets. In 2011, it accounted for nearly 34% of spending in rural municipalities and 36% in city municipalities (Kordasiewicz and Sadura 2017). In theory, local government units were allowed to close down schools whose running costs exceeded the amount of the subsidy provided by the central government, but in practice every decision regarding the closure of a school was met with social discontent at the local level. In 2009, a new regulation was introduced: it became possible to entrust the running of a small school (under 70 pupils) to a non-governmental unit or a natural person. In such cases, subsidies—calculated on the basis of the number of students—were to be transferred directly to schools; local authorities were no longer required to bear all operating costs of schools.[1] Importantly, schools run by non-public entities were exempt from the 'Teacher's Charter', which made it possible to 'save' on employment costs.

For reasons listed above, discussions over the closure of some of the schools in the rural municipality under analysis had extended over a period of 15 years. Yet, on each occasion, the decision to close a school was ultimately abandoned given the fierce objection of parents and teachers.

In January 2012, the Education Commission of the Municipality Council was presented with a report on the economic aspects of the local educational system. The Mayor, who had commissioned and overseen the preparation of the report, concluded: "We have never experienced such a desperate situation in the municipality. Spending on education can ultimately lead to the collapse of our budget" (minutes of the Council meeting). Councillors and school principals attending the meeting were to consider two solutions: either to close down the smallest rural schools, or to entrust the running of schools to non-governmental

entities. 'A decision needs to be taken by the time the Council meeting is held, i.e. within three weeks. We need to consider closing down one, two or three schools', the Mayor continued. Councillors have asked for more background information enabling them to assess the possible financial and social impacts of the decision.

During two meetings that followed, Education and Budgetary Commissions accepted drafts of resolutions by virtue of which the running of schools would be entrusted to non-governmental entities. All drafts were prepared by the Mayor. Eventually, the Municipality Council accepted the plan to entrust the management of three schools to non-governmental units or natural persons (seven votes in favour, two against, three abstaining). As required by legal provisions in force, these plans were presented to the local board of education and to trade union representatives of the teachers. Despite the opposition expressed by the latter, preparations continued with respect to two of three schools.[2] Parents who had expressed their concerns were reassured that nothing would change with regard to the educational services provided to their children. In September 2012, two out of three schools started the year as public entities run by private individuals. Table 4.1 illustrates the flow of key events.

4.3 Governance and Framing: Managerialism, Legalism, and Representative Democracy

The regulation introduced in 2009 afforded the possibility of finding a middle-ground solution: keeping all schools within the municipality while releasing the municipality from the financial obligations towards two of its smallest schools. The Mayor, a graduate of Law and Public Administration, strictly followed the legal guidelines set out in the regulation. Together with the Treasurer and the legal advisor, she planned the process in advance. During the Council meeting, she strictly rejected all propositions for an alternative approach, including those suggesting public consultation. At this point in time—that is, before the resolution was taken—public consultations were considered irrelevant. The *legal frame* used by public

Table 4.1 Chronology of key events—dispute over the closure of three small schools in a rural community

Date	Events
2009	A new regulation enables municipalities to entrust the running of a small school (under 70 pupils) to a non-governmental unit or a natural person
November 2011	Municipality Council takes resolution on rules and procedures of public consultation
December 2011	Mayor commissioned municipality administration unit with preparation of 'A report on the economic aspects of the local educational system'
January 2012	Education Commission of the Municipality Council presented with the report
February 2012	Mayor met school principals and prepared resolution drafts Drafts of resolutions deciding to entrust of schools to a natural person voted over in: Budgetary commissions (for 2, against 0, abstained 2) Education commission (for 5, against 0, abstained 0) Council meeting (for 11, against 0, abstained 1) Decision presented on rural meetings
Spring 2012	The local board of education issued a negative opinion on the plans to entrust the management of the third school to an external entity, as the number of pupils (79) was greater than permitted by the regulation (up to 70) Mayor consulted teacher's trade unions representatives
August 2012	Discussion of schools preparedness for a new year 2012/2013

officials emphasized the importance of meeting certain formal requirements. A newspaper article prepared by the legal advisor of the municipality provides a good illustration. The article is devoted to the "pitfalls and traps" involved in the closing of schools and in delegating the responsibility for running them. "Most common mistakes committed by municipalities" entering such processes are listed. Firstly, the draft of a resolution concerning plans to close schools or entrust their management to external entities are too often not being presented to the teachers' trade unions. Secondly, many municipalities do not respect the obligation to inform the parents about the intention to close a particular school six months in advance. And thirdly, some municipalities "fulfil the resolution about closing or delegating a school without fulfilling the resolution about the intention to close a school or delegate its management" (newspaper article, April, 2011).

Within this narrative, communication with a diverse range of stakeholders was reduced to the obligation to meet legal requirements without any reflection on their actual purpose, such as the coordination of diverse interests, for example, triggering discussion over different viewpoints, broadening the scope of choices and so on. In this case, participation and public consultation were part of the legal requirements that needed to be met. And they were met in a manner that resembled a ritual. The main danger of the ritual is to mess up the steps. This is how this reasoning was enacted in practice:

Mayor:	Let's discuss all possible options in order to choose what is best for the community.
Head of the Council:	This is why I am proposing to reach out to the community and discuss it with them. We can make this decision next year. In the meantime, the school will remain open, we can talk to parents and prepare for the possible reorganization.
Mayor:	I do not know what I ought to present to the community right now. We have no solution, and no opinion regarding a possible solution issued either by the regional authority or by trade unions (…) once the resolution is adopted, I can officially consult people. I do not know what the Council's decision will be and I do not know what to ask the community. Shall we delegate the management? Shall we close the school? Shall we establish a non-public school? By reaching out to the community, we will know their opinion and gain an insight into their line of thinking. We need to take a decision. I think this procedure is consistent with the letter of the law. If anyone wants to draw attention to him or herself for political reasons and cause turmoil in the community, then it will not be fair towards myself or towards the Council. (minutes of the Council meeting)

There is, however, something more to the legal frame: the reference to legal aspects represents a demonstration of symbolic power. The Mayor

was able to apply this kind of framing to discussions, which left councillors feeling confused and insecure. The majority of them did not take part in discussions (see also the next section on the dynamics of the decision-making process). The major opponent—the head of the Council—tried to play according to the rules imposed by the Mayor. In order to make his disagreement regarding such principles more convincing, he tried to emulate the legal language by stating:

> In my opinion, adopting the resolutions in this way is erroneous. We should not adopt them. I think that decisions should be taken only after public consultation and the solution should come into effect in 2013/2014. Let's not adopt resolutions which we know are inconsistent with the law. (pp. 17, minutes of the Council meeting)

His point is of a general nature and touches upon the question concerning the right way to make these kinds of decisions, as well as the question of whether, how and when the public should become involved. There is an important difference between asking about the right way to manage public issues and establishing whether such an approach is consistent with the law. By stepping into an imposed framing, he is setting himself up to fail, because the Mayor's proposal is consistent with established legal regulations. Within this narrative, consistency with the letter of the law is the supreme virtue. Reflecting on the possibilities offered by the law, indeed its spirit does not emerge within this legalist line of thinking.

The managerial frame comes to the surface in the narrative used by the Mayor during an interview. In her own words:

> [in the municipality] everything works just like in a company. There is an executive board responsible for the implementation, but also for making the board of directors aware that something is going wrong, about the threat of bankruptcy or imminent danger. (interview, July 2012)

Very much in line with this view, during a Council meeting held in January, she signalled that "education can make the budget collapse" (January 2012, minutes from the Council meeting). Her perception of leadership was individualistic, she felt personally responsible for turning attention to the

problem, diagnosing it (with the professional help of her office staff) and proposing a solution that could later be subject to voting and an external assessment. At the beginning of the interview, she stated: "I faced the following dilemma: either we keep these schools, or we invest in the development of the municipality" (July 2012). In the world of limited resources and fiscal discipline introduced by new central regulations, and the fact that central government decentralized the responsibility for managing schools (that is shifted the burden of financing education to the local government level), the Mayor perceived herself as the guardian of the budget and a person who needed to be creative and entrepreneurial in order to be better able to deliver public services. Each year, a specific sum from the central budget is set aside to cover about 50% of the costs of running schools. In poor rural areas, there are limited possibilities to make up the shortfall in the budget with revenue generated through personal and corporate income taxes. In an interview, the Mayor provided an outline of solutions she had used in order to make education less costly (importantly, she often resorted to the first person narrative e.g. "I decided…, I organized…"): establishing common school administration for all entities, employing teachers with several specializations, using a church charity to help cover some of the infrastructural expenses, putting together classes with small numbers of students (also across different age groups e.g. the fourth grade together with the fifth grade), engaging parents with regard to voluntary work and reparations. She expected the same, entrepreneurial attitude from school principals.

> The principal needs to be a good manager, he or she does not necessarily need to be a teacher. The principal is supposed to manage the school, acquire sponsors, engage in working relationships with the local environment, make connections with parents who can support him/her through the delivery of products and the provision of services. The principal needs to be entrepreneurial in his/her outlook and approach. (interview, July 2012)

The managerial frame provoked many objections within the community. In the interview, the Mayor mentioned that she had been accused of trying to 'make money on schools'. Indeed, during the

Council meeting, one of the school principals mocks the economically motivated, managerialist approach:

> Why don't we turn a gymnasium into a supermarket, eating areas and other parts of the school building into a hotel? We could group the children into the remaining parts of the building. This will make schools profitable and self-sufficient! (minutes of the Council Meeting, February 2012)

Importantly, within the managerialist frame used by the Mayor, citizens are described as "clients" (interview, July 2013) who need to be provided with public services. An important element of the line of argument in the dispute over schools was that parents would not even feel the difference, because their children would attend the same school and be taught by the same teachers, and therefore they should not be alarmed by the situation.

The third governance frame emerging from the analysis is *the representative democracy frame*. It is most comprehensively presented in the narrative of the head of the budgetary commission, who is both a councillor and a local entrepreneur. When asked about the *post factum* assessment of the decision-making process, he answered:

> Contacts with the local community could have been better, even though they can also be risky. A meeting may *veer out of control*: it is enough that someone shouts one of those popular phrases, such as <<thieves!!! everyone is stealing!!!>> for the squabble to start. So the goal of *explaining* to people what is going on will not be realized and a lot of unnecessary emotions are generated (…). You need to *present people with* some kind of decision. And this is not about being arrogant towards them (…). This is why elections are held every four years: representatives are elected in order to make decisions on the behalf of people whom they represent. Sometimes public consultation is needed, but often it is not worth the hassle. (the councillor_1, interview, July 2012)

Both the Mayor and the councillor emphasized the importance of direct, face-to-face contacts with the local community. It is thanks to meetings during local fests, open days, or office hours that they are

able to learn about local problems and needs. These meetings are not treated as an opportunity to discuss problems and develop possible solutions. The focus is very much on information gathering rather than on ideas that stir up debate. Information gathering stays the focus when formal regulations of public involvement are implemented in the municipality. In November 2011, following central regulations, the Municipality Council adopted a resolution on public consultation. According to the resolution, consultations can be carried out in the form of meetings or opinion surveys. In ten out of eleven consultations conducted in the municipality in the years 2014–2017, citizens (or NGOs, depending on the subject matter) were asked whether they agreed or not with certain solutions proposed by the local government.[3] Using a survey to acquire a yes/no opinion on an idea is in fact a mini voting and as such replicates the logic of representative democracy. Again (just as in face-to-face meetings) consultation is about gathering information based on the rules and modes of thinking imposed by those in power, rather than about discovering new perspectives by opening up for dialogue and alternative solutions. The logic here is as follows: when obtaining specific information from the ground, public officials and councillors are able to better represent the local community. When appropriately informed, people are more satisfied with the performance of representatives. The importance of the local newspaper published by local authorities is emphasized here. It informs citizens about issues being discussed and decided upon within the municipality. The major goal of the newspaper is to raise public consciousness about the way in which the municipality is managed, where the resources come from, and how they are (re)distributed. Representative democracy implies a hierarchical relationship between citizens and the local government. It assumes that the latter are enlightened leaders, whose role is to "discuss and inform people using the language that is easy for them to understand" (Mayor, interview, July 2012). Importantly, it is assumed in this frame that by improving communication, they increase consensus over proposed solutions and prevent people who "highly irresponsibly" misinterpret government actions and "distort social order by inciting and agitating local residents" (the Councillor_1, interview, July 2012).

Each of these frames—*managerialism, legalism and representative democracy*—supports a hierarchical, top-down approach to decision-making and assumes that citizens' control and engagement are expressed through the act of voting. Within a legal frame, good governance means governance consistent with the rule of law. The role of public officials is to make sure that this is the case. The participation of citizens does not appear as an independent value even if the law prescribes it. In the managerialist frame, the citizen is a client who needs to be provided with public services. The quality of these services is guaranteed through the acquisition of management system certificates (e.g. ISO certificate first acquired by the municipality in 2009). Also in this case, participation facilitating input (knowledge, ideas) from grass roots and the co-creation of solutions for social problems seems to be an inadequate concept.[4] Within the representative democracy framework, councillors and officials are elected in order to make decisions on behalf of those whom they represent. In the case examined, this frame facilitates a paternalistic approach to the relationship between local government, administration, and citizens. The first mainly focuses on educating citizens on how the municipality is managed and on informing them what is being done. Whether this relationship is fruitful or not (according to this frame) depends on the individual qualities of both, that is, citizens and elected representatives. Citizens need to be educated, be receptive to information (and, from time to time, engage in argument-based discussions), while elected representatives need to enjoy the respect of those whom they represent.

4.4 Dynamics of the Decision-Making Process: Reducing Uncertainty by Pushing Out Any Dissenting Voices

The combination of two factors, namely the introduction of the system of central financing of schools, and changes in the number of students and processes responsible for diminishing the number of students in rural areas (such as the demographic decline and the process of urbanization)

placed increasing pressure on municipal budgets. Also, in the analysed municipality, pressures systematically rose from the early 2000s. Different strategies were used in order to cope with this problem (see the previous section), but eventually in the autumn and winter of 2011, while preparing a budget, the Treasurer and Mayor decided to propose a more radical solution: either to close or to entrust the running of the schools to a non-governmental entity. At this point, information gathering commenced. Firstly, the Mayor commissioned the preparation of a report illustrating economic aspects of the local educational system. The report was presented to the Council as a ready diagnosis of the problem (point to education as a possible reason for the collapse of the budget) together with the proposed solution: "We need to consider closing one, two or three schools" the Mayor stated (minutes of the Council Meeting, January 2012), adding that delegation was another option. The stage during which the nature of the problem was discussed and the search for possible solutions took place was reduced to a minimum. Without any critical comments, councillors accepted the definition of the problem and focused on discussing the proposed solutions. Already at this initial stage of the process, the "language of certainty" prevailed over "the language of inquiry" (Yanow 2009).

The councillor requested the preparation of a simulation of "social and economic costs of both scenarios" (closing and delegation). Two weeks later, at the subsequent meeting of Budgetary and Education commissions, councillors were presented with (a) a financial simulation (in which the issue of social costs was not addressed), and (b) drafts of resolutions covering each option (closing of schools or delegation). Drafts were prepared by the Mayor. Importantly, in the meantime, she had also decided on the form of delegation. Initially, she considered the creation of a municipality-owned company to run the schools, but she abandoned the idea after consulting a legal advisor. She then turned to the principals to ask them to take over. When offered the choice to either close the school or for it to be taken over, they chose the latter option.

The Head of the Municipality Council, present at both meetings (of Education and Budgetary commissions), demanded expanding the

timeframe for making such decisions and the organization of public consultation. Major concerns raised by him referred to the uncertainty associated with the preferences and decisions of other stakeholders. Parents and their choices were the greatest source of uncertainty. Many inhabitants working in the nearby city decided to educate their children close to their workplace. It was feared that, on hearing rumours about plans to close smaller entities, those who sent children to municipality schools might decide to enrol them in bigger schools. Another party whose opinion and plans remained unknown were the teachers. Would they stay at the school where conditions of work were at their worst (due to being exempt from the Teachers' Charter guaranteeing good working conditions) and the future remained uncertain? Even principals deciding to take over the schools were not able to discuss these issues directly with the teachers, as the two weeks when decisions were taken coincided with the winter holidays.

During the meeting, some ideas for the adoption of an alternative approach were presented. Most often the idea of the redistribution of pupils was raised—some schools in the municipality were over capacity, with more than 35 pupils per class. Yet, the Mayor had already adopted the language of certainty and she was able to impose it by pushing out dissenting voices. During all three meetings (of Education and Budgetary commissions and of the Council) she opened the discussion with a strong, *agenda-setting statement*: "The closing of schools is the worst option. I consider it best to entrust the management of schools" (minutes of Council meeting, February 2012). She was the person who *most often took the floor* and her speeches were *longest*. She constantly *referred to legal procedures* when developing counterarguments; for instance, she rejected the idea of consulting external stakeholders, as the law requires the consultation of resolutions that have already been taken (see the quote below and the previous section). She emphasized the importance of a legalist frame by submitting 'self-corrections', and explaining to councillors why one particular legal wording used in a resolution draft

should be considered better than another one. The Mayor also *decided when the discussion would end and the voting would start:*

> I ask you to finish this discussion and vote on the drafts. I will respect your decision. I cannot go to the people and ask for their opinion now. I will do that once you have adopted the resolutions. Without having such decision regarding the actions to be taken, I am unable to change anything within the education policy. (minutes of Council meeting, February 2012)

Commissions accepted the drafts of resolutions concerning the entrusting of school management to external entities with a majority of voices (the Education commission unanimously, the Budgetary commission with two voices in favour and two abstaining, while the draft on the closing of schools was not voted on at all). The Municipality Council accepted the resolution on the plan to delegate the school to non-governmental units or private persons (seven votes in favour, two against, three abstaining).

These plans were further consulted, as legally required, with the county educational office and with representatives of teachers' trade unions. Despite opposition expressed by the latter, work continued with respect to two out of three schools.[5] Parents who expressed their concerns were reassured that nothing would change with regard to educational services provided to their children. Voices of discontent among stakeholders were classified under one of the following four categories of malevolence: (a) politically motivated, (b) seeking individual interests at the expense of the public good, (c) manipulated, (d) insistent.

Problems with the financing of education in the municipality inspired reflection, which was rather individual than collective, and turned the process into a linear, predictable, and controllable chain of events. The appearance of dissenting voices did not distract the Mayor from following a well-known path. She was not willing to re-think the way in which different stakeholders, their values, interests, and knowledge were coordinated. She took the usual course of action in searching for a solution. When considering the general financial information on schools, she referred to the municipal local education board and to the municipal Treasurer. For information on legal aspects and possible legal actions, she consulted the municipal legal advisor. Dissenting voices, in particular

those calling for involving a wider group of stakeholders in the process, were ignored. As a result, she only reflected on the objects, and not on the subjects of governance. By not allowing external stakeholders to become a part of the process and fighting alternative voices within the Council, she prevented any collective reflection on the problem and its possible solution. Despite the fact that she eventually entrusted the management of the school to a third party and, theoretically speaking, allowed external actors to govern public issues, she did not share her authority, but executed it by imposing her will on all actors involved.

In the current form of the decision-making process, Council meetings are the only forum on which collective reflection may take place. It has already been illustrated how dissenting voices are 'naturalized' and dismissed based on the stereotypical assumption that people (including councillors) will always oppose whatever is suggested to them, usually for reasons that are neither rational nor well-intended. Formal and informal institutional arrangements make it even easier to ignore these voices. Over a period of time, councillors had gradually become accustomed to the Mayor taking the initiative. An analysis of the minutes of meeting that took place between September 2011 and August 2012 indicates that 16 statements made during the discussion held prior to the voting on schools delegation were an exceptionally large number (even considering that four of them were the Mayor's statements). No comments are usually expressed between the reading of a resolution project and it being put to the vote. This informal rule was incidentally violated by two people: by the Mayor herself, when she submitted self-corrections, and by one of the councillors, who was an open and committed opponent of the Mayor. However, these comments failed to incite any further discussion.

Summarizing, in comparison with other Council meetings, those devoted to schools were relatively dynamic. Financial crises forced the Mayor to reflect on the way education was managed within the municipality. She knew it had become impossible to continue implementing old strategies. Yet, the decision-making process was stifled, because it was dominated by a single actor (the Mayor), who systematically eliminated opportunities for any collective reflection on the goals and means of the local educational policy.

4.5 Conclusion

Within the theoretical framework of governance—be it collaborative governance, New Public Governance, or other related concepts—the meaning of participation varies. Yet most of the time it is about making public management more effective and democratic at the same time (see Chap. 2). It is about using local resources, such as knowledge and experience, in order to design products and services effectively and, by doing so, meeting social needs. It is about facilitating reflection through bringing together diverse perspectives concerning a particular problem or issue, about making sure that the process is just and the interests of diverse parties are well represented. It is also about the process of evolutionary learning, where diverse stakeholders "learn how to refine and improve their values, knowledge, and practice in a continuous fashion" (Ansell 2011, p. 9). Theoretically speaking, legal regulations on public access to information, consultation and participation could support this kind of interpretation. However, when these regulations are permeated by *legalist, managerialist and representative democracy frames of interpretation*, the result is quite the opposite. In the best-case scenario, participation is about acquiring feedback from citizens/clients. When this feedback takes the form of a 'yes' or 'no' response it does not include opportunities for discussion or open dialogue. As a result, no synergic effect of dialogue—beyond a simple aggregation of opinions—is likely to occur. Learning opportunities are scarce, as there is no place for questioning of assumptions, bringing alternative definitions, or different types of knowledge. Public officials neither acquire nor are exposed to new perspectives. Citizens do not learn how the local government *really* works nor have an opportunity to understand the reality of the financial constraints of decision-making.

Notes

1. Until 2009, the law did not allow for the possibility of transforming the Local Government Unit—public schools run by local government units into public schools run by non-public entities. However, there was a loophole.

It was possible to delegate the management of a school in two stages: firstly, by closing down the public school, and then by establishing in its place a public school run by a non-public entity.

2. The local board of education issued a negative opinion on the plans to entrust the management of the third school to an external entity, as the number of pupils (79) was greater than permitted by the regulation (up to 70). The board refuted the argument that 10 students lived outside of the school's catchment area.
3. Consultation processes have been documented since 2014. The most recent one (the design of a developmental strategy for the municipality) breaks the rule of 'yes' or 'no' questions and offers open-ended questions. Citizens are asked to choose three areas of action where they would like funds to be allocated, and incited to express their opinion about the municipality's strengths and weaknesses.
4. Although this frame can also have participatory versions, in which clients as service users are encouraged to participate in the development of public service (co-production in public sector reference).
5. Formal reasons presented in the explanation.

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5

Public Administration Leaders as Institutional Entrepreneurs: Dispute over the Location of a Marketplace

The authorities of this town do not talk to people. They are afraid of people (…) I can see fear in their eyes when something like this happens: protests, openly expressed dissatisfaction of certain groups. First, they never consult any ideas either with us – lower level municipality administration – or with the stakeholder groups, because they think we are stupid and have nothing to contribute. When they eventually do something, they get lambasted. And then they start fretting again: 'What shall we do in order to reverse it'?
Municipality Mayor, interview, March 2013

5.1 Introduction

Interpretation of this case is built around the role of individuals and, specifically, of intra-organizational leaders in the processes of institutionalization and learning of new governance patterns. The actions of three leaders are subject to analysis: the Mayor of the Municipality pushing for inclusive management involving the public, the first Vice President of the city, who represents top-down, traditional approach to public management, and the second Vice President who applies problem-centred,

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collaborative governance. All three of them take action in response to the same problem and within the same context, yet they make different choices on whether and how to respond to pressure and involve relevant actors and institutions in public management processes. The analysis illustrates that even in the face of complex problems and public pressure, the shift from government to governance is neither obvious nor necessary; public agency, just as any other organization, may accommodate practices according to different lines of reasoning and values. Tensions and conflicts caused by this diversity affect the dynamics of governance institutionalization (Selznick 1957; Washington et al. 2008) and the dynamics of governance learning.

5.2 Description of Events

Green Market is one of the oldest markets in one of the largest Polish cities. It dates back to the early nineteenth century, when minor merchants and farmers started flocking here to trade in their goods. In the early 1980s, a large market hall was built to accommodate some of the traders. The remaining area was occupied by small stands and sheds, densely squeezed one next to the other along narrow passages, creating a square-shaped maze around the market hall. In 2008, when the city's plans of closing down the market were announced by the press, there were as many as 300 officially registered stands.

It was not the first time that the market was threatened with—at least partial—eradication. Seven years earlier, when the market was under the administration of city authorities, half of the area was to be sold to a private investor, with the intention to build a modern business centre. Due to the protests of local merchants, these plans were abandoned. Municipality administration together with city authorities and merchants developed modernization plans for the market infrastructure. The planning process stalled after general elections in 2006 and the subsequent political changes. On the municipality level, the Mayor initially involved in the development process was re-elected. Following the elections, he helped establish a temporary committee which was in charge of any issues related to the market and operated along the Municipality Council. The discussion about the future

of the market continued. In 2008, two years after the elections, the administration of the market was delegated to municipality authorities, yet no resources were earmarked for its modernization.

In the summer of 2008, a local newspaper published an article whose author claimed that the City Hall, in cooperation with a city-owned property developer, planned to build two blocks of flats on the plot currently occupied by the market. Some space on the ground floors was to be allocated for merchants. Over the months that followed, merchants, the temporary committee, and the local newspaper objected to the plan and started to mobilize the public against it. However, city authorities and the investor were not discouraged by these protests; they even invited protesters to participate in the planning of residential complex.

Months that followed were marked with further mobilization. Three new associations were established in order to defend the market, and new measures were undertaken, including protests and administrative proceedings aimed at blocking the investment process.

In the summer of 2009, a momentous incident took place. After long and unsuccessful negotiations, city administration decided to remove temporary halls and small stalls from the another area of the city. The intervention turned violent. Merchants barricaded the halls and tear gas was used to force them out. Water cannons were used against those who remained inside.[1] One of the city's major streets witnessed riots, as a consequence of which 22 people were arrested and 100 people needed medical help.

Two months after following the event, the Vice President participated in the Municipality Council assembly for the second time. He presented a modified version of the investment plan: blocks of flats were to be constructed only in the northern part of the plot, while a modern market was to be located in the southern part. The proposed solution gave rise to concern, as it was clear that the space reduced by 50% and the shopping area on the ground floor would not accommodate all merchants.

Early in 2011, a new actor entered the scene. The Polish Sociological Association (PSA) embarked on a project aimed at 'developing a systemic infrastructure for dialogue between municipality authorities and municipality inhabitants in the matters of spatial planning'. It had been provided with the European Economic Area Grants (EEA Grants) and funds from a city administration department responsible for public communication

(Social Communication Department, SCD). The idea of the project emerged during discussions between the Mayor, municipality officials, and researchers specializing in public participation and conflict mediation. According to the Mayor, the involvement of external researchers was badly needed to solve the conflict over the Green Market. Although researchers imagined the project rather as a tool for developing and implementing a model of public dialogue about proposals, instead of one for dialogue over already existing plans, they agreed that the case of Green Market would provide an opportunity for a mediation experiment. The Vice President of the city welcomed the idea and researchers designed the mediation process, starting with desk research and interviews with key stakeholders.

Over the months that followed, mediators were trying to determine who should represent city authorities in the process. In October, the Vice President of Warsaw was promoted to a state-level post. His successor, the new Vice President, rejected the idea of mediation after having attended a meeting held by the Municipality Council.

The new Vice President organized a series of meetings with merchants' representatives, the Mayor of the Municipality, the management of the market (municipality-level administration), and the company which had been awarded the contract for the modernization of the southern part of the market. During these meetings, all issues related to the modernization of the southern part of the market were discussed, including the design of a new market hall, the temporary relocation of the building and so on. At that time, residential buildings were to be constructed in the northern part of the plot. In June, merchants from the southern part were relocated. Construction work began in winter, but slowed down and eventually ceased several months later, following the bankruptcy of the construction company. A new contractor took over in the autumn of 2013. Until the autumn of 2017, the northern part of the area remains unchanged and serves the same purpose. Merchants resumed their activities in the modernized southern area and to the market hall in summer 2016. For a detailed chronology of events see Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Chronology of key events—dispute over the location of Green Market

Date	Events
1983	Green Market hall is constructed in the area traditionally used for small-scale trading activity. Some merchants move into the building, while the majority remain in the neighbouring area and continue selling goods from small stalls and booths
2002–2005	The market fails to generate the expected profits for the city. City authorities consider selling the land occupied by the market place (in order to construct an office building). Eventually, following merchants' protests, these plans are abandoned Municipality administration is entrusted with the management of Green Market In conjunction with the City Hall and merchants, municipality authorities prepare a modernization plan
2005	City authorities are entrusted with the management of Green Market
Autumn 2006	Local government elections. City-level officials who were engaged in designing the modernization project and negotiations with merchants are not re-elected. The Mayor of the Municipality is re-elected. The new ruling party expresses its willingness to modernize the market
2008	Managing of the market is delegated to municipality authorities
Spring 2007	The Mayor continues the modernization dialogue with local merchants. The Municipality Council establishes an ad hoc market committee
July 2008	A local newspaper informs about the City Hall's plans to build blocks of flats. The investor is a company owned by the city
September 2008	A delegation of merchants meets: (a) The Mayor of the Municipality, who confirms that city authorities plan to build a block of flats with retail space on the ground floor (b) Members of the municipality ad hoc committee declare to be surprised by these plans
October 2008	The local newspaper draws up a petition to city authorities City authorities and the investor announce an open call for proposals for the 'architectural concept of a residential complex with retail facilities'. Representatives of local stakeholders are invited to be members of the jury

(*continued*)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Date	Events
November 2008	An extraordinary Municipality Council meeting is held; the Vice President of the city presents a spatial planning project to transform the area
	Municipality Council issues two official statements: (1) an appeal to the President of the City and to the City Council prompting them to discontinue the decision-making process regarding market place until comprehensive development can be subject to public consultation, (2) a rejection of the idea to build residential buildings
December 2008	The City Council earmarks additional funds for housing investments despite the protests of market defenders at the meeting
January 2009	The Mayor of the Municipality creates an advisory team that is to act as a 'social consultant' with regard to changes planned by the City Hall. The team is made up with a large and diversified group of stakeholders. The majority of merchants' representatives decline the invitation
	First street protests opposing the liquidation of the market are organized by ad hoc social committee
July 2009	City authorities decide to remove merchants from another place in the city, namely the area around the City Hall. The intervention become violent: 22 people are arrested, 100 provided with medical help
September 2009	The Vice President of the City presents a modified investment plan to the Municipality Council: Residential buildings are to be constructed in the northern part of the plot. A modernized market place is to be confined to the southern part. A temporary location for the market is to be defined
June 2010	A special committee—a new participatory body coordinated by the Mayor of the Municipality— issues a petition to City authorities demanding new solutions that would enable all merchants to resume their activity upon market place modernisation

(*continued*)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Date	Events
February 2011	'Local Model of Social Dialogue' research project is launched. It is coordinated by the PSA and financed with European Economic Area (EEA) Grants and the Social Communication Department (a unit within the City Hall) The Mayor of the Municipality persuades researchers to use Green Market as a case for analysis and to undertake intervention in the form of a mediation process The Vice President agrees to the mediation
February–June 2011	Researchers prepare conflict analysis and meet stakeholders (separately)
July 2011	The first plenary meeting of all parties: The start of the mediation process
August–September 2011	Mediators look for a representative of the City Hall
October 2011	The Vice President of the City is appointed to a national government post The new Vice President participates in a Municipality Council meeting and meets mediators
December 2011	The polish sociological association decides to withdraw from the mediation
February–May 2012	City authorities organize a call for proposals regarding the modernization of the southern part of plot of land The Vice President holds approximately eight meetings with stakeholders
June 2012	Merchants from the southern part are moved to a temporary location
September 2013	The decision about the future of the northern part is postponed until the subsequent term of office (2014–2018)
October 2014	Election to local government. No political changes in city and municipality authorities
November 2015	Merchants move back into modernized facilities in the southern part of the market place
January 2016	City authorities entrust the management of the market to municipality authorities The Vice Mayor responsible for the market-related issues declares that the northern part of the plot is to be modernized
June 2016	Opening ceremony of the modernized southern part of the market (the building and the surrounding area)

5.3 Participation Experiments: Governance Learning and Institutionalization at the Municipality Level

City Hall's decision to put the lowest government level (municipality) in charge of market management coincided with the first public participation experiments of local authorities. The Mayor recounts this period as follows:

> Around 2005, we participated in a city-wide park revitalization project. We proceeded in the usual manner: we had some guidelines from the City's Environmental Department, we prepared all documents accordingly and selected landscape architect in a call for proposals. We discussed everything through and through with the appointed architect, who subsequently developed a design that we decided to show to the inhabitants. I remember it was an evening in November, and the meeting was attended by about 50 people. We were sat there proudly while the project was being presented: what a great design we have managed to create! And then it started. We were given a total dressing-down: because no public consultation was organised, because it was Byzantine, why the fence, why the playground there and not in another place…When we recovered from the shock, we came to the conclusion that something needed to be done about it. It did not make sense to proceed with the project in the face of such tremendous disagreement. After several meetings, our approach and plans changed substantially: we ended up by basically implementing the ideas of local inhabitants. This was the start of this process. If we wish to do something important, we need to talk to inhabitants first, before any plans are made. (interview, March 2013)

The approach to the modernization of the market followed this logic. The Mayor and municipality officials held several meetings with merchants, during which they discussed together 'what to do next'. Several ideas were put forth. The process was managed by the Mayor himself, with no particular organizational roles or procedures allowing him to conduct a participatory decision-making process. Following local elections, a political change affected the City Hall, unlike municipality

authorities. The Municipality Council established a temporary committee in charge of the market issues. The Committee expressed its support for solutions developed before elections and awaited acceptance, along with financial support, from city authorities. After nearly two years of silence, the latter suggested that the market be removed altogether and replaced with blocks of flats. Failure to abide by local agreements had dramatic consequences for relations between municipality authorities and external stakeholders (merchants). The Mayor recalls:

> it was a turning point in our relations (…) merchants were outraged, calling us liars, thieves and accusing us of betrayal. Naturally, despite my intentions, I found myself on the other side of the fence. We started to painstakingly rebuild our totally ruined relations. In our attempt to do this, we tried to explain to the Vice President responsible for the investment that such management methods might be suitable for business, could be applied to banks for instance, but not within a local community. (interview, March 2013)

The sudden removal of agency shattered the process within which all sides were learning to participate in joint decision-making. Municipality representatives tried to lobby for abandoning the plans of city authorities, but external stakeholders remained unaware of these attempts. They understood that municipality authorities were not a reliable partner and that participatory decisions were not respected. Some suspected even that the dialogue regarding the market was a fig leaf for real political plans of the Mayor and the President (whatever they might be). One of the merchants recalls:

> my trust for municipality authorities and the President was destroyed. We had an agreement on how we would proceed. It was signed by the Mayor, with formal support of the President of the city (…) and [only two years] later we were told by the Mayor that this document was worthless. I am asking you: in a country where presidents change following regularly held elections … [should such agreement not be binding for the successor]?! (interview, April, 2013)

The Mayor was trying to rebuild the relationships by establishing a new participatory body: an advisory team that was supposed to serve as a

'social consultant' in charge of changes planned by the City Hall. However, municipality authorities did not own the process any more, and therefore, the propositions of the Mayor remained symbolic gestures of faith in participatory governance. The majority of merchants declined invitations on the grounds of municipality authorities not being empowered to implement any solutions.

The Mayor was not discouraged and actively looked for opportunities to introduce participatory approaches into the management of public matters. In an attempt that may be described as *planned efforts to learn* a new participatory governance mode, he convinced researchers from the Polish Sociological Association to prepare a project aimed at designing and testing a systemic model of dialogue between the local government, its administration and citizens regarding public space planning. The planned result of the project was supposed to be the institutionalization of participatory approaches within the structures of municipality authorities. The project received funding from EEA Grants and the Social Communication Department (a city administration unit). Researchers were initially planning to focus on developing new consultation processes from scratch. Yet, the Mayor of the Municipality persuaded them to use Green Market as a subject of analysis and subsequent intervention. His reasoning (eventually adopted also by the researchers) was the following: neither city authorities nor merchants and local NGOs were willing to surrender. Municipality authorities are between a rock and a hard place, totally helpless. Something needs to be done. Let us bring all parties to the table and find a solution in the process of mediation. Yet, after several months, several individual meetings with stakeholders and one general meeting, the process ground to a halt. Mediators publicly announced and explained the decision:

> Since August [2011], we have made attempts to continue mediation and organize a second meeting of local government representatives and merchants. In our assessment, the primary difficulty was the appointment of local government representation. (…) Protracted hesitation regarding the subsequent meeting caused a feeling of disappointment and undermined the purpose of mediation. Given the situation, we have decided to terminate the process. (open letter, December 2011)

The decision was met with harsh criticism from the merchants. Users of Internet forums boiled with rage and dozens of negative comments were made in response to the letter. Mediators explained later that the main principle of mediation requires it to be a voluntary process based on coercion-free participation. This clarification was not received with much understanding. Merchants' representative comments on the mediation process as follows:

> The Mayor tried some weird stuff, some parley or mediation (…) The Polish Sociological Association barged in and *they taught us one thing* – before you sit at the table with someone you need to check who this person is taking money from. Whatever happens, I will not talk to such people any more. If I hear that someone receives subsidies directly from the city, I will never sit at the table with them. We had high expectations of this process (…) but then the Association stepped back at the most decisive moment. Obviously, they were trying to persuade us that it was for our own good. Supposedly, there was no support from the city. (interview, April 2013)

The experiment with mediation failed and merchants' representative interpreted it as a smoke screen used by city authorities that first financed the process, and then distanced themselves from it. The analysis of learning and institutionalization process at the city level shows that this interpretation was not valid (see the next section for the description of the Social Communication Department, a unit that applied and promoted a different institutional logic than city authorities in general).

Importantly, the Mayor of the Municipality assessed the mediation experiment as 'rather positive'. He claimed that the experience was beneficial to all parties involved, as it 'let off some steam from the conflict'. His interpretation might be just an attempt to save his face. Nevertheless, some of his decisions, such as the establishment of yet another advisory board and participatory body can be interpreted as symptomatic of his belief that openness and participation would always bring good results. This non-reflexive attitude prevented him from understating the limitations of this approach. Repeated attempts to include people in a process that was not formally owned by the municipality, or within which the municipality did not play a decisive role, deterred people from

any initiatives involving 'participation' or 'dialogue'. In this particular case, initial willingness to cooperate was misused: stakeholders learnt that their voice did not count and participation was just apparent.

Simultaneously—in other, less conflict-ridden local political areas—the Mayors' experiments with participation, supported by experts from Polish Sociological Association and by the Social Communication Department resulted in the institutionalization of participatory approaches within municipality. Research projects and further cooperation with the Department, financed with EEA Grants, resulted in the development of consultation procedures and an official post for a person in charge of public participation and consultation. The new post was embedded within a wider community of professionals practising participatory approaches in public administration: those active within other municipalities of the city, and in the city level administration, in academia and in non-governmental organizations, primarily those functioning within the area of the so-called city movements.

5.4 City-Level Processes of Governance Learning and Participation: Fake Learning and Leadership for Governance

Protests organized by merchants and the local community were triggered by a top-down, hierarchical decision that paid no heed to agreements previously adopted at the municipality level. When faced with protests, city authorities decided to reframe their actions and turn towards somehow more participatory and inclusive practices. They announced a call for proposals to select a project and empowered external stakeholders to influence its results through inviting them to be part of the jury. High-level city representatives attended the extraordinary meetings of the Municipality Council. During the first meeting held in 2008, the Vice President and officials wanted to hear the opinions of local residents; during the second, held a year later, they presented a project modified in accordance with some of the requests made by merchants (though without their participation). According to the new plan, residential blocks were to be confined to

the northern part of the plot and a modernized market was to be constructed in the southern part. During construction and modernization works, a temporary location for the market was to be designated. In the meantime, after the violent events following the closing of a market in the city centre, city authorities humbly declared that they were going through "the process of learning" how to deal with public participation (first Vice President, newspaper interview from September 2009).

At that time, stakeholders treated these initiatives and declarations as a façade covering the fact that the decision had already been taken and authorities were not willing to discuss any major issues anymore. When invited to be a member of the jury of the open call for architectural projects of a residential complex, a local journalists wrote:

> Accepting an invitation would mean that our newspaper agrees on the implementation of this project. In fact, it is just the opposite. We are not only opposing these plans, but also actively mobilizing public opinion against it.

He added ironically:

> Are we going to discuss complex solutions for the entire area, or is it about the number of floors in the new blocks of flats? (March 2009)

Subsequent project modifications introduced in autumn 2009 did not go down well either. A representative of the merchants recalls:

> I did not participate in the process during which the solution to my problem was defined. Now I am presented with the solution that I am not satisfied with. It is as if someone gave me shoes two sizes too small and said: "wear them and be grateful", and I can only decide whether to cut of my toes or my heels in order to be able to put them on! (interview, April 2013)

From the very beginning, protesters were using the language and values of participatory democracy in order to justify their position and to reveal the inappropriateness of the attitudes and practices of local authorities. A journalist recounts the process:

> It is my impression that the democracy ends after you place a ballot into the ballot box. Apart from that, there is only the democracy of bureaucrats, which means authorities know best what is good for the people (…) They seem to see it like this: you can protest all you like: local councils, petitions, what have you, we will do whatever we want anyway. (local newspaper, June 2010)

One of the merchants' representatives stated in an interview: "the city and the state clearly communicate their agenda in such cases: we need you, idiots, only two days before a referendum or elections" (interview, April 2013).

In mid-2009, merchants acquired a new pressure tool. It was a threat of organizing an active, physical resistance, should the city be oblivious to their opinion. A street-level bureaucrat directly involved in the management of the market recalls:

> After these experiences {riots caused by closing the market in the city centre}, authorities were too scared to move the market to a temporary location. They did not want this scenario to repeat itself – it had a very negative impact on the image of city authorities.

Three months after the violent crisis, the city presented the Municipality Council and merchants with modified plans, and asked for their feedback. After that, no action was taken for nearly two years. When the proposal of mediation emerged, city Vice President accepted it. In an interview, the new Vice President claimed that the agreement was

> a result of panic, of a desperate search for a solution [in a stalemate situation]. To a certain extent, it was also a result of a coincidence that municipality authorities signed an agreement on this sociological project. (June 2013)

The new governance tool was applied because all options available in old, hierarchical governance modes had been tested and proved unsuitable. Further developments indicate that decision-makers relied on mediation neither as a results of a critical reflection on governance nor because of the willingness to learn and experiment. They relied on mediation simply because they found themselves at a loss.

The first Vice President appointed one of the officials as a representative of the city in the process. However, when the first meeting of parties eventually took place, all city officials present declared that they were not entitled to take any decisions. During subsequent meetings, this time with city officials only, mediators were trying to advance the process. According to mediators:

> Despite detailed explanations of mediation principles and goals, Director X [appointed by the Vice President] stated that she could not act as an actual representative of the city in the mediation process and that the procedure described by mediators was not defined in regulations governing the work of city authorities (…) A serious obstacle in the process of disseminating dialogue and consultation is the lack of unambiguous legal and procedural regulations which would justify and explain to citizens their access to civic dialogue. The City Council is still working on a resolution regarding public consultation, as well as an ordinance of the President of the City regarding participation and initiative-taking by city inhabitants in such processes. (PSA report 2012)

The meeting with the Vice President was postponed several times, until it was announced in the autumn of 2011 that he had been appointed to a national-level position and would be leaving his office. The mediation experiment ended with Polish Sociological Association officially announcing their abandonment of the process.

Alternative governance practices (in this case, mediation) were neither actively supported by top-level management, nor by formal institutions defining the code of conduct of officials. The latter was delivering the content for a professional ethos confessed by city officials directly involved in the process. They perceived mediation as an "inappropriate" way in which to handle cases. This particular situation illustrates an issue that is central for governance. The movement towards governance *does not mean the sidelining of the role of government,* but rather increasing public participation that will allow the government to achieve its goals (Pierre and Peters 2000; McLaverty 2011). Government steers the process, with participative decision-making by non-governmental actors who implement strategic objectives (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). In the

case under consideration, the government representative (the Vice President) stepped back from a steering role in order to hand it over to a non-governmental actor (PSA). Two years later, the director of the Social Communication Department critically reflected on this decision:

> City authorities cannot act as a party [of a dispute], but rather they should act as a mediator. They need to encourage mediation or consultation. In this case, the PSA made a mistake, because they took over the role that should have been performed by authorities. Those who take decision need to invite and listen to the public. (interview, June 2013)

5.5 How Does Change Happen? Looking for a Favourable Configuration Between Leadership, Structure and Environmental Pressures

The new Vice President who entered the scene in the autumn of 2011 put the above mentioned guideline into practice. Contrary to his predecessor, he took over the responsibility for the process and was confident about the steps to take. Within one month, he contacted the Municipality Council, met merchants' representatives and formed a working group whose task was to develop a plan for the area. From the very beginning, he defined the problem as requiring participatory approach, multijurisdictional and multi-level governing. His actions were not a result of external or intra-organizational pressures for participatory governance, or at least they were not their main driving force. He felt confident when acting within and through networks. This confidence had two sources: a strong conviction that it was the right thing to do, combined with the knowledge and competences necessary to overcome problems linked to governing the silos structures of city authorities. His individual capabilities and way of thinking could find support in the patterns of thinking and acting already present (though not dominant) within the structures of city administration. An interpretation below illustrates how the two elements—structure (institutions understood as patterns of thinking and acting) and agency (individual orientations)—made problem-solving possible.

First, the new Vice President's agency was enhanced by his individual capacity to ensure multijurisdiction and multi-level governance.

> Before I became the Vice President, I was the head of a department whose operation depended entirely on cooperation: it was responsible for acquiring European funds. I can tell you that we went through hell. It was OK if I spoke to someone and the person understood that I needed something from them and they needed something from me. But if the head of the department was …reluctant… a phone call to the President was necessary. The President had to persuade the person to work with me. (interview, June 2013)

The practice of horizontal coordination and inclusion was enhanced by his way of thinking about the governing processes. He actually *believed* that participatory democracy was the right way to manage the city. Interestingly, in his reasoning he does not refer as much to values behind the concept as to the certainty that participation is the present and the future of city governance.

> The world is changing (…) even 10 years ago, no one would think about participation [neither stakeholders nor officials]. The city is evolving, each structure *is becoming more civilised* itself (emphasis added). I do not believe this could be stopped. Whoever comes after cannot reverse this trend, as it is more likely rather to deepen. It is like a historical necessity. If someone tries to reverse it, they will fail. In 2008, we introduced the practice of document consultation. Until then, nothing had been consulted. The iron rule of representative democracy was enacted. Many would say "There are councillors in municipalities and so on…they represent people" You could ask anyone about it in 2006, and the answer would be "we have municipality councillors, why would we need to consult anyone?". (interview, June 2013)

As testified by the above story about the decision-making process regarding Green Market, participatory approaches to governance were not deeply institutionalized within city organization, neither informally (e.g. in ways of thinking) nor formally (e.g. in regulations). This is why the Vice President's 'There-Is-No-Alternative' narrative should rather be treated as a strategic measure than as a description of reality. While resorting to this narrative, the new Vice President performed a form of institutional work. He questioned and, to a certain extent, ridiculed the old

(but still dominant) governing method as 'uncivilized' and obsolete, while justifying and presenting as obvious new ways of thinking and acting, which may be present in public administration, but not deeply rooted. Interestingly, as an argumentative weapon, instead of having recourse to values behind participatory democracy, he used the threat of 'lagging behind'. He admitted that some officials and politicians continued to think that old ways and rules were better.

> In 2006, you would hear such opinion everywhere. They would argue in favour of the iron rule of representative democracy. They would mock participatory approaches by saying "oh, yes, if we do direct participation why should we even keep councillors?" I hear such voices now but no one dares to say it aloud. (interview, June, 2013)

During the first phase of the conflict, when the first Vice President was in charge, the ideals of participatory democracy were leveraged by public administration officials in an instrumental way. These ideals were still neither widely shared nor used as guidance and applied. Authorities even used the 'we have learnt' mantra (Hood 2000), when trying to indicate that they drew a lesson from a failure of not including the public into the decision-making process. However, the inability to take any decisions for over two years suggests that they might learn what not to do (single loop), yet remain unable to learn what to do differently (double loop).

When the second Vice President was in charge, the participatory rhetoric was already in place. In this sense, what had previously been used as a façade, started to be filled with relevant content. Fake learning opened up a path for true learning.

5.6 Institutional Void as Governance Void: An Institutional Entrepreneur Meets an Institutional Leader

The case recounted above illustrates how the values and the rhetoric of participatory approaches were (ab)used in order to regain legitimacy for hierarchical, top-down planning. Public agency (city administration) was perfectly capable of accommodating these diverse approaches to governance.

Experiences of the head of Social Communication Department (SCD) are a good example of how these different lines of reasoning coexist.

> The creation of our department [in 2008] was a portent of change in the approach to governing. Within the organizational structure, we [SCD] were placed right beneath the President. It was a high rank. On the other hand, no one would provide us with necessary resources to grow. (…) We are an off department: internally we are not perceived as part of administration, rather as an extension of NGOs. (interview, June 2013)

> Creating a department without providing it with the necessary resources is a clear sign that its responsibilities are not perceived as crucial. Yet, the department was able to grow very quickly, owing to the director's ability to get external funding (EEA grants) for project developing public consultation practices in the city and within individual municipalities. During the interview the director stated: "You can write it explicitly: if the funding from Norwegian grants [EEA grants] had not been provided, we would have never accomplished so much in such a short period of time. Of course, political will needs is crucial. There needs to be a leader who wants these changes to happen." (interview, June 2013)

As experience with the two Vice Presidents proves, both lines of reasoning (the one based on hierarchy and the one based on participation) were fully operational. As the old, hierarchical ways remain the *default option*, whether the new way of governing will be enacted depends solely on the *mobilization and purposive efforts* of its supporters within the organizational structures of the administration. Yet, until governance practices are not codified in the form of procedures or regulations, or expected ways of performing responsibilities defined for specific organizational position, they take place within an *institutional void*. The Vice President explains:

> The problem is it is mainly the President, and Vice President only to a lesser extent, can coordinate this caste-like structure [of city administration]. On the level of heads of departments, this capacity [to coordinate] is not developed at all, because they are not used to coordinate, they are not even held accountable for it. It depends upon individual knowledge and skills whether the director recognizes that a certain situation requires

> that a supervisor, or head of another department will be involved. But most of the time, they are used to perform their particular tasks by default. Reversing it today, after so many years, is very difficult. (interview, June 2013)

The governance process is therefore hand-controlled and pushed forward by an individual (the Vice President) who has both power and political will. This individual becomes an institutional entrepreneur who: (1) initiates various changes; and (2) actively participates in the implementation of these changes (Battilana et al. 2009), for example, by questioning the old ways, providing justification for new ones and, above all, by enacting the latter. Practicing a new governance mode forced other social actors—both internal and external to public organization—to confront these new methods and come up with their own responses. The position of power made it possible for the new Vice President to force some of the officials into the new governance mode. Others, who already tried to work according to this new logic, received substantial support and could further learn and improve their practice.

The situation described above provides an interesting counterpoint to Philip Selznick's (1957) idea of institutional leadership adopted to describe leadership positions in public administration. Selznick sees leadership in public administration as the promotion and protection of values. He suggests that the process of institutionalization occurs as leaders respond to internal and external forces that exert pressure on organizations. The existence of multiple governance logics, and hence multiple values represented by each mode splits the institutionalization process, because in the process of governance the number of values that need promotion and protection multiples. In the analysed case, the new Vice President could be described as both an institutional entrepreneur using future leaning vision, and an institutional leader promoting and protecting values such as social justice and democracy. As the controversy indicates, each of these values can be interpreted differently depending on the governance mode adopted by authorities. The new Vice President promotes them within a framework of collaborative and participatory governance modes (based on networks). Considerations on metagovernance presented in Chap. 2 of this book suggest that the concept of institutional

leadership within public administration could be extended to include the promotion of reflexivity, the organization's ability to critically assess the act of problem-solving and, when necessary, switch between the lines of reasoning and interpretations of values, blending them depending on the situation.

Note

1. In terms of governance and delegation of public services to the non-public organizations, it is interesting that the intervention was initially conducted by a private security firm hired by a debt collector whose role was to collect payments that merchants owed to the city. Tear gas inside the halls was, in fact, used by the private security firm workers, not the police.

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6

Institutionalization of Governance and the Transition from 'Fake' Learning to 'Real' Learning: Dispute over the Modernization of a Wastewater Treatment Plant and an Incineration Plant

Once the project had been prepared, we held a meeting at the investors' headquarters. The Mayor of the municipality was present. He made an emotional speech, saying that 'no', that they [inhabitants and municipality authorities] 'do not agree [for the modernization]'. Back then I thought that this person was from another planet. How can one disagree?!
Regional Agency representative, interview, July 2007

6.1 Introduction

The public dispute around the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is closely connected to the conflict around the modernization of the market. Both disputes took place in the same city and overlapped in time. Contrary to the market case, in which focus shifted between municipality and city authorities, this case concerns solely changes and processes taking place

A case described in this chapter was also subject of an analysis in a paper 'Local government and learning. In search of a conceptual framework' (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016).

M. Strumińska-Kutra, *Democratizing Public Management*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74591-6_6

within city administration. It illustrates the process during which new, participatory governance mode was being institutionalized within the organizational structures of the city and how it found its way through the established ways of thinking and acting, eventually becoming part of formal regulations at the city level. The interpretation of this case relies heavily on the institutional concept of isomorphism, as public dispute is rooted in environmental matters subject to relatively fresh and somewhat revolutionary changes to national-level regulations. In essence, they were to empower citizens to participate in environmental decision-making and to give them access to information about the environment. Here, it is shown how the conflict infuses these formal regulatory structures with real-life content or, in other words, how abstract regulations become inhabited by people (Hallet and Ventresca 2006) who begin to give them meaning and enact them.

6.2 Description of Events

In the face of inadequate wastewater treatment infrastructure, one of Poland's largest cities was forced to take steps to expand and modernize the local facility. The city had to meet environmental standards imposed by the European Union, and this obligation created a strong pressure. In 1999, the City Council decided to modernize the old WWTP instead of building an additional facility. From 2000 to 2004, an investor and local authorities jointly developed the project. By the end of the process, planners decided to expand the project by adding a waste incineration plant (IP). The investor was a city-owned firm, in charge of providing sewage services within the metropolis. The Regional Agency of Environmental Protection and Water Management (RA) oversaw the preparation of the project.

In the spring of 2005, the project was presented to the residents of the neighbouring area. Protests began when the local community realized that the old facility would not only be modernized, but also expanded in order to process wastewater from the entire city, and that an IP would be constructed nearby. The investor launched administrative procedures to obtain all necessary permits from relevant city authorities (e.g. decision

on the location of the plant, building permits, acceptance of an Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA] report, etc.).

Simultaneously, protesters tried to become involved in the decision-making process. As many participation claims were rejected by the administration protesters took legal action against the investor and the city on the grounds of their right to information and participation in environmental and spatial decision-making process being violated. In the meantime, the Regional Agency accepted the project, and authorities applied for financial support from EU funds. By the end of 2005, the European Commission (EC) approved the project. Any changes were supposed to be included in the project by the end of September 2006.

The first major public meeting attended by all parties took place in May 2007 in the City Hall. Local authorities organized so-called administrator trials and invited two experts to present their opinions on the planned facilities and answer questions from the public. A month later, the President issued an agreement on the construction of the IP which, in consequence, escalated local protests. Municipality authorities also became involved: not only did they express their support for the protesters, but promised them legal assistance if they decided to claim damages.

In January 2008, city authorities broadened the scope of competences of a small unit responsible for communication with the public (Social Communication Department, SCD). With its new position within the organizational structure, it became an independent unit subordinated directly to the President. Its new tasks included building connections and consultation structures with municipalities of the city.

In the summer of 2008, city authorities established the Social Council in charge of monitoring the investment process (i.e. commissioning independent expert opinions regarding projects developed by the contractor). Members of the Council were stakeholders involved in the conflict, and several scientists. The Protesters' Committee (PC), the first organization created by protesting inhabitants, refused to become involved in the Council's work.

Between 2009 and 2011, major construction works took place. The facility became operational in early 2012. In the meantime, PC's activities slowed down and, eventually, ceased altogether. In 2010, the Social Communication Department established the Public Consultation

Platform, a register of all past (since 2008) and current consultation processes, fully accessible to the public. In 2013, the President of the city issued a decree defining public consultation; by virtue of this document, each consultation process held by the city administration was to be announced on the Public Consultation Platform. For a detailed chronology of events see Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Chronology of key events—dispute over the modernization of WWTP

Date	Developments in the Polish system of local government relevant to the case
The 1990s and the early 2000s	Decentralization reform in 1999, introduction of a self-government system: city (headed by a President) and municipality (headed by a Mayor)
	Law adjustments in preparation for Poland's accession to the EU: laws regulating access to public information (2001), public participation in environmental decision-making and spatial planning (2001), environmental impact assessment reports (2001 and 2008)
Date	**Case-specific events**
1998	Establishment of the Centre for Communication and Social Dialogue as an administration unit within city authorities
1999	The City Council decides to modernize the old WWTP
2000–2004	The city-owned sewage service firm (investor) and city authorities prepare the project under the supervision of the Regional Agency (RA)
2004	The investor integrates an additional facility (a waste IP) into the project
Spring 2005	The investor and city authorities present the project to the residents of the municipality
	The residents and a local NGO establish Protesters' Committee (PC)
	RA approves the project
	The investor applies for EU funding
Summer 2005	The investor initiates administrative procedures at the level of city administration. City authorities deny some of the protesters the right to be participate in the decision-making process
Autumn 2005	City authorities issue first construction permits for the project
	Protesters file lawsuits against the investor and the city
Winter 2005/06	The EU grants financial support to the project
	The Municipality Council issues an official letter demanding the city to desist from implementing the project and calling for the construction of a new facility elsewhere

(*continued*)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Autumn 2006	Local elections to city and municipality authorities. A PC representative becomes a member of the Municipality Council The new President of the City—despite of initial support for protesters—puts the project out for bidding
Winter 2006/07	The investor organizes an Open Day at the site of the project
May 2007	Authorities organize a major public meeting (administrative trial) in the City Hall
June 2007	The President signs a permit for the construction of the IP in the unchanged form Municipality authorities declare their support for the protesters and sign an agreement with the President and the investor's representative regarding the development of sewage infrastructure within the municipality The investor hires a professional mediator
Jan 2008	Broadening of the competences of the Centre for Communication and Social Dialogue (new name: Social Communication Department, SCD). The ambit of the Centre's responsibilities now includes systematic documentation of all public consultations
June 2008	The President puts the IP project out for bidding
July 2008	The Social Council is created by city authorities and the investor. The PC refuses to join it
2009–2011	Major construction works at the WWTP. PC's activities slow down and eventually cease
2010	The CSC establishes the Public Consultation Platform, a register of all past (since 2008), and current consultation processes freely accessible to the public
2012	The project is finalized
2013	The President of the city issues an act defining public consultation; each consultation process held by city authorities is now required to be published on the Public Consultation Platform

6.3 Institutional Change and Local Governance Learning

The following analysis is structured according to Coleman's logic of explanation, although I begin from its middle step that is, I first focus on the organizational level, where old and new ways of governing meet through the interaction of public administration officials, company

representatives, and protesters. Then, the impact of macro-level circumstances (formal, national, or European institutions) on interactions is explored. I subsequently investigate the institutional structure emerging from the process. Finally, I reflect on the process of institutional change from the perspective of learning.

Interactions at the Micro and Meso Level in the Context of an Organization and the Organizational Field In the early stages of the WWTP planning process, public participation was not even considered; this approach was in line with the common, hierarchical logic that used to govern the administrative practice. An official from the Regional Agency supervising the technical design of the project in 1999–2005 recalls that the two conditions considered necessary for project development at the time were met: 'the company owned a plot of land; the City Council adopted a resolution ratifying modernization and building plans'. When stakeholders external to the formal process made their initial requests to participate in the decision-making process, their demands were perceived not only as illegitimate, they were surprising. The diagnosis formulated by the mediator employed by the investment firm at a later stage of the process (in June 2007) is consistent with this line of interpretation:

> Consultations are supposed to be understood as participation at the very beginning of the process. Here, no attempts were made to involve the inhabitants of the municipality. Maybe (…) decision-makers thought that nobody would oppose an investment of such importance for the city. (local newspaper, September 2008)

At the beginning, when dealing with the protests, local authorities used a legalist frame, i.e. had recourse solely to administrative and judiciary procedures. First, they argued that the process took place in compliance with legal requirements. Second, based on the results of the EIA report regarding the investment, officials denied some of the stakeholders the right to participate in administrative procedures. It significantly escalated the conflict, as the right to become a party depended on a range of externalities defined in the EIA report, which in this case was commis-

sioned and financed by the investor. Therefore, the right to become a party potentially depended on the investor and, in this case, on the city. At that point, inhabitants and their associations started filing lawsuits.

The intensity of the protest forced the local administration to implement formal national and European requirements regarding information and public participation. Protesters would mercilessly point out regulation breaches and mistakes made by city administrators. Officials responsible for the process began to look for new solutions to the problem. By that time, participatory institutional arrangements, already in place in accordance with formal requirements, had hardly been applied. However, in the new situation they became a potentially useful tool for contacts with protesters.

The most important among these arrangements was the Centre for Communication and Social Dialogue, created in 1998 as a small city administration unit in charge of communication with NGOs. In January 2008, city authorities broadened the scope of competences of the Centre and transformed it into an independent unit within the organizational structure (subordinated directly to the President). The unit, now called the Social Communication Department, was entrusted with new tasks, inter alia, building connections and consultation structures with municipality authorities.

Starting from 2007, the investor and city officials developed a comprehensive information and consultation policy. It involved press conferences, open days at the WWTP, the publication of leaflets and brochures, an interactive information platform, and opinion surveys. Residents gained access to a plethora of participatory tools and mechanisms, many of them introduced for the first time in the city's history, for example, the creation of a special post within the company's executive board (the Board's Plenipotentiary for Social Obligations), the organization of meetings with parties (like the administrative trial), the establishment of the Social Council in charge of monitoring investment, and—last but not least—the employment of a mediator.

However, none of the participatory mechanisms proved to function as expected by city authorities and the company. The PC refused to delegate a representative to the management board and to participate in the Social

Council. Any invitations to dialogue were regarded suspiciously, which is best illustrated with the Committee's response to an open letter from the company:

> An invitation directed to the residents of the area where the investment is planned should be the very first step of a government who wishes to solve the problem of wastewater management in the city. We still lack crucial information about the investment. We do not and will not take part in an investment that has not been accepted by the community. (March 2007, the webpage of the Protesters' Committee)

In addition to conflicts of interest, stakeholders were torn by stark conflicts of values and divergent perceptions of good governance. The protesting community referred to input legitimacy based on participatory democracy:

> Civil state is a state in which local communities feel as owners and managers. Their power to decide about their own habitat is a cornerstone of democracy. Here, civil and self-governing activity of inhabitants was disdained, their dignity and freedom crushed. (June 2007, an open letter in response to the issuing of the building permit for the IP)

The output legitimacy of hanging on to arguments of cost efficiency and environmental effects delivered by the city did not suffice. Protesters felt deprived of agency and left alone with their concerns, mainly their fear of the negative impact of the project on health. New participatory methods and tools simply failed to deal with these problems.

From Macro to Meso and Micro: Macro-Level Institutions Influencing the Process Institutions empowering stakeholders in decision-making played a central role in the process. National regulations guarantee to citizens the right to information and participation in matters regarding the environment and spatial planning. They provide for the right to participate in decision-making processes and any rights relating to claims for damages. Protesters referred to the above in their strategic actions aimed at undermining the purpose and legitimacy of the investment. Pressure exerted by

stakeholders was further amplified by another institutional arrangement, namely the requirement of public participation and consultation in relation to projects financed by the EU. A city official stated the following in an interview in 2008:

> In the case of projects financed by the EU, environmental impact assessment procedures are slightly different than normal. We have implemented a whole range of new instruments so, from the formal point of view, I do think that a lot more has been done than in other investments of a comparable size. (interview, March 2008)

The above quotation is an example of juxtaposing ordinary public administration procedures with requirements imposed by formal regulations on public information and participation. In addition to these types of coercive pressures (i.e. coming from legal sources), examples of normative pressures (i.e. coming from normative orientations of professional groups) have been identified in the available data. The same official explained:

> City authorities participated in a European project regarding communication problems related to large investments. Each of the many participating cities presented a project that we subsequently discussed: what could be done, how should communication with local residents be organized, what mistakes had been committed. We shared our experiences and tried to find optimum solutions for each project. (interview, March 2008)

New impetus for the creation of the Social Communication Department was given by the EEA Grants, which offered money for public consultation processes. In 2013, the first SCD director stated:

> It was a happy coincidence that just at the beginning of our operation, money from EEA Grants became available. We would never get such funding from the city (…) back then, it was not considered a fundamental need. (interview, June 2013)

Training for public administration professionals and financial support for specific, innovative projects illustrate how macro-level institutions organize learning of the new governance mode and provide opportunities for the diffusion of new practices.

From Micro to Meso and Macro: Institutionalization The analysis of the implementation of participatory methods by the local administration and the company demonstrates that they were treated, above all, instrumentally, as actions aimed at regaining and defending the legitimacy of the project. New ways of acting were accompanied by old ways of thinking. The emerging institutional hybrid was the outcome of both: strategic actions undertaken in power struggles and inertia typical of institutional structures.

Firstly, public administration and the investor strategically applied participatory tools to regain legitimacy for decisions that had already been taken. All core features of the project were designed in a hierarchical and technocratic process by 2005. As a matter of fact, they were irreversible; administrative procedures were already in progress, the EU financing had been approved, and changes were no longer possible given the approaching deadline for the modernization of the wastewater management infrastructure set by the EU. Crucial decisions were made without the participation of the public; as a result, the process entered a lock-in phase almost directly, and the conflict itself became unresolvable (Schreyögg et al. 2011). During the administrative trial at the City Hall, a representative of regional authorities who supervised the project addressed the problem in an inconveniently straightforward way:

> The European Commission is not ready to accept any changes to the project. The programme for 2004–2006 is closed. It is not legally possible [to introduce changes]. For technical reasons, the IP needs to be located in the vicinity of the WWTP. It is time to tell the truth to the inhabitants and treat them seriously. (field notes, May 2007)

As the public agency and the investor could not regain legitimacy through the incorporation of any substantial changes into the project,

they launched an advertising campaign, which included survey results proving that "the majority of residents support the WWTP" (local newspaper, July 2007) and reports from Open Days organized at the WWTP, featuring the statements of visitors who expressed their positive impressions: "I feel much more confident after visiting the plant. It's so clean and tidy" (investors' webpage, February 2007).

Secondly, the emerging institutional hybrid was the result of institutional inertia. Actors implementing new institutions were cognitively and normatively embedded in old structures. A city official who actively participated in training sessions and workshops on public participation critically summarized the process in an interview conducted in 2008:

> Many mistakes were made (…) Decision-makers perceived it more as propaganda than a tool for establishing real contacts with the locals.

In an interview sponsored by the investor and published in a local newspaper, the Minister of Regional Development concluded:

> Protests can usually be accounted for by the fact that people learn about an investment, such as a road or an IP after a formal decision has been taken. It should be the other way around. *Education* first, decisions next. (local newspaper, March 2007)

Equating consultation or participation with education indicates that some officials (and politicians) did not follow the logic of participatory governance despite having adopted some of its practices.

The institutional form that emerged from the conflict was a hybrid containing aspects of both new and old governing methods. In short, adapting to external pressures was only superficial, new actions were accompanied by old ways of thinking, and there was a gap between formal policies and actual organizational practices. Eventually, protests were marginalized and the investment drew to a close—with a two-year delay—in 2012. Yet, changes introduced into the organizational structure of public agency, as well as the knowledge gained in the process and practices adopted during the conflict, have left an important legacy in the form of organizational background for further growth and the questioning of the logic of hierarchical governance, thus far taken for granted.

These opportunities were not wasted: in an interview held five years after the establishment of the Social Communication Department, its first director explained:

> If someone had told me back then—in 2008—that in 2013, we would have participatory budgets in all municipalities of the city, I would have called him a lunatic. Currently, the SCD coordinates and facilitates public consultation within the city and liaises with social communication departments of municipality authorities that have emerged in the meantime. Officials come to us as soon as any problem comes to light, e.g. a potential public protest. They also contact us about conflicts and we facilitate the mediation process. (interview, June 2013)

The process of public consultation was gradually formalized. Since 2008, all public consultations have been documented. Reports, statistics, as well as information on ongoing projects are publicly available on the Public Consultation Platform (established in 2010 with financing from EEA Grants). In 2013, the city's President issued a decree defining public consultation; pursuant to this act, any public consultation held by city or municipality authorities had to be announced on the Platform.

6.4 Introducing Learning into an Institutional Perspective

The process of institutionalization described in the previous section occurred in parallel to the process of learning within public agency. Stakeholders challenged the legitimacy of routine activities in investment planning. The official from the RA described his first encounter with the protesters as follows:

> We held a meeting at the investors' headquarters. The Mayor of the municipality was present. He made an emotional speech, saying that "no", that they [inhabitants and municipality authorities acting as their representatives] 'do not agree for the modernization'. Back then I thought that this person was from another planet. How can one disagree?! (interview, June, 2007)

The process of learning, therefore, began with a feeling of *surprise* provoked by confrontation with alternative definitions of the situation and with resulting claims. The new definition disrupted institutionalized patterns of thinking and behaving deployed by the public agency to deal with the problem, that is, wastewater management difficulties. In their initial reaction, authorities followed the strategy of "more of the same" (single-loop learning). Procedural and legal rules were used to legitimize the exclusion of stakeholders from the decision-making process and to prove that all legally required measures had been taken, that is all information obligations had been complied with and the comments of those entitled to participate in the administrative process were responded to. Yet, stakeholders began to mobilize and organize. They defined the same legal and procedural rules more broadly in terms of their participatory and democratic aspects. They decided to fight for participation using the media and courts but, above all, by referring to legal participatory institutions.

Authorities gradually changed the logic behind their actions by implementing a range of participatory mechanisms. Common, hierarchical ways of decision-making were partially replaced with new, participatory methods. This phenomenon can also be described as a learning process directed at double-loop and explorative learning.

The analysis of the case suggests that the goal of learning is not necessarily to gain excellence in the delivery of public goods and services, but rather to acquire new tools and arguments in the struggle over legitimacy and control in a specific policy domain. Gilardi and Radaelli (2012) call learning for the sake of legitimacy, not focused on improving policy performance, 'symbolic learning', while learning aimed at maintaining control is referred to as 'political learning'. In the case analysed, both forms of learning can be observed, as well as the emergence of an institutional hybrid. The hybrid contains tension between the espoused participatory theories and theories-in-use (Argyris and Schön 1978). The hybrid nature displays through the blend of old and new. A new practice like participation is framed as education, that is, stakeholders of the process are educated on the advantages of decisions already taken. Interestingly, political and symbolic learning triggered processes of double-loop and exploratory learning as its side effects. New institutional

structures enabling participatory decision-making were introduced (SCD, public meetings, information policy). Heads of different departments among the city authorities broadened the range of workshops and training sessions available to their employees to include access to public information and public participation. These structures induced members of the organization to communicate with each other and with external actors, and to reflect on a potential policy controversy.

The above developments illustrate that the process of institutionalization is different and separate from the process of learning, which is not clearly described in governance learning literature (Gilardi and Radaelli 2012). I propose to regard learning as an intentional activity undertaken at the individual level, transformed to the meso level through social interactions and the development of shared understanding and practices. Negotiation and power struggle are parallel to this transition and therefore the meso-level effect rarely reflects the intentions of any particular individual or interest group in an adequate manner. In our case, officials learnt to use participatory tools for strategic reasons. Nevertheless, even such 'fake' learning resulted in institutional changes, initially unintended by the subjects of learning. In the case of double-loop learning, based on the ability to question the appropriateness of originally adopted beliefs and practices, motivation for learning (e.g. regaining legitimacy) is secondary. The questioning of the hierarchical logic that has been taken for granted, and even the superficial introduction of participatory logic, creates a powerful precedent, forms a basis for building new institutions, and opens up space for negotiation among all actors involved in the process (Rządca, Strumińska-Kutra 2016).

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7

Governance Failure and Social Trust: Dispute over Building a Flood Prevention System

What happened there was the worst possible scenario. In the face of resistance, they just dropped the issue of barriers. The area is at risk… we have not drawn any lessons from those events.
A national agency representative, interview, October 2013

7.1 Introduction

The barriers, a main object of protests, were part of a larger flood prevention system including for example, dredging of the river, monitoring of embankments. Inhabitants of the valley were protesting against the investment because they perceived it as a selective[1] approach to the problem, and as such endangering rather than protecting their livelihoods. They demanded a more complex approach taking into account the realities of public agencies functioning, which in this case included budget cuts resulting in long years of negligence in dredging works and

Most of the data used for an analysis of this case were gathered by Robert Rządca (including fieldwork and collecting of archival documents).

M. Strumińska-Kutra, *Democratizing Public Management*,
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maintenance of anti-flood infrastructure and broken promises about the delivery of financial help after the most recent flood. In the face of protests, the Marshal called the investment off leaving the problem of security unsolved.

Each party involved in the planning and decision-making process considers it a complete failure. The director of the regional-level public agency responsible for the investment blames it on the public's propensity to act emotionally rather rationally. During an interview he concluded: "I often think about the valley. Demagogy prevailed instead of support for the right idea" (interview, October 2013). An academic expert who participated in the public meeting considered that one of the main reasons for failure was the lack of understanding of economic constraints: "I agree the barrier does not suffice and other things ought to be done, but we cannot do everything at the same time; it would require money from the budget" (interview, November 2013). The Mayor who issued the building permit and supported the investment expressed the opinion that failure was due to the very organization of meetings. "Preparation was inadequate. There were so many emotions… I think experts should be present, but they need to be backed up by people who have excellent communication skills" (interview, November 2013).

As one could expect, those who opposed the investment point out the different reasons for the failure of the process. The Mayor of the protesting municipality argues:

> I think that the combination of two solutions might be acceptable (systematic dredging and barriers). Yet, if someone says it will be done (dredging) and it is not, I do not believe him. Even when resources are scarce but something is being done, people see it and take it into consideration. The conflict escalated, because everything was happening below the radar, without anyone knowing. Consequently, the project failed. (interview, March 2014)

A local activist stated: "We did not believe them. We will be left to our own devices. If there was a crisis and no money was available, no other barriers would be built (except for this one)" (interview, March 2014). A representative of the central-level public agency responsible for dredging who attended the meetings but without being actively involved neither into the investment process reflected:

> This issue needs to be re-examined, but in a comprehensive manner. There must be guarantees that the programme will receive financing (…); what actually happened was the worst possible scenario. In the face of resistance, they dropped the issue of barriers. The area is threatened…we have not drawn any lessons from what has happened. (interview, March 2014)

Those responsible for the investment process still believe that they either failed in their attempt to convince the public that barriers were needed, or that the public is immune to rational arguments and the process was doomed from the start. For those opposing the investment, the discussion was not only about barriers, but also about the entire flood prevention system and hollow promises made by various public agencies about providing infrastructural and financial help to protect the area from the flood. These perspectives could not converge in a constructive discussion without redefining the problem, and therefore redefining the goals of the public management process. In other words and according to the theoretical frameworks of good governance, metagovernance, and learning, some critical reflection was needed in order to question the methods and goals of the planning process. The reflection did not take place. The problem remained unsolved.

I attempt to offer an interpretation highlighting institutional and social factors conditioning the flow of the process. I illustrate how relatively new governance practices, such as the inclusion of the public into decision-making processes, were infiltrated by traditional—hierarchical and technocratic—ways of acting and thinking. I trace the significance of institutional pressures nested in professional attitudes of experts and public officials (normative pressures), pressures linked to formal regulations and procedures (coercive pressures) and pressures related to the observation of comparable agents and similar cases (mimetic pressures). I try to capture the result of the process: were governance institutions transformed throughout the controversy? Eventually, I attempt to shed light on learning processes.

The pre-established theoretical perspective of institutions and learning seems to be useful in understanding what happened in the case analysed. Yet, data analysis points to the notion of social trust and its relation to governance, which emerge as significant. American economist Kenneth

Arrow called social trust "an important lubricant of the social system". The case shows that the same holds true for governance systems. In my view, this case is about governance practices destroying social trust and about the lack of social trust destroying governance.

7.2 Recount of Events

The Central Valley is located along the middle course of Poland's longest river, the Vistula. Flood risk in the area is high. The dam located in a nearby city slows down the current, which causes increased sedimentation of materials carried by the river. Due to sedimentation, these stretches of the river are shallower, and therefore the level of water is higher when culmination waves arrive. The valley is 40 km long; its width ranges from over 5 km to 250 m. Total area at risk of flooding exceeds 11,000 ha.

On 23 May, when anti-flood embankments could not hold any more water, they burst and the valley was flooded. 1500 people—soldiers, firemen, and local inhabitants—worked for 30 hours and used 320,000 sandbags to erect a 1200-metre long temporary barrier in order to stop the water and protect the areas located nearby. The second wave came two weeks later. It flowed through a breach in the embankment and flooded the area located ahead of the barrier. Nevertheless, the barrier saved large areas of land, several small cities, villages, and stretches of farmland located behind. The idea of constructing permanent flood barriers was brought up again. Initial plans to divide the valley with barriers perpendicular to the river dated back at least 30 years, to 1982 when Vistula flooded the area in the winter. Eventually, barriers were not built, but the Vistula was systematically dredged until the early 1990s, when financing of the project ceased due to budgetary cuts.

Soon after the flood, many public and private agencies rushed to the area to help. National authorities promised to buy out the land covered with sand and no longer suitable for farming. The owner of the hydropower plant on the nearby dam cancelled local inhabitants' energy bills. The issue of flood prevention and measures taken to recover from the flood were discussed on numerous occasions during meetings held by local authorities. The construction of barriers was briefly discussed. In autumn,

one of the inhabitants came across a call for tenders for the construction of barriers published on the Internet by the investor, a regional-level agency responsible for flood prevention projects (Regional Agency for Melioration and Water Management, hereinafter referred to as the Regional Agency or the investor). When local inhabitants requested more information, two meetings were held, one with the Mayor and another with the director of the Regional Agency. During these meetings, it was explained to the public why barriers were needed. At that time, the number of barriers to be constructed or the actual stage of the project and its advancement remained unknown.

In November 2010, local (the central municipality), regional (Regional Agency for Melioration and Water Management) and national (Environmental Protection Agency) authorities decided that the first barrier would be built by Central Village, in order to ensure greater flood protection to the local pumping station. Until the spring of 2011, all necessary permits were obtained, including the permit issued by the Mayor of the central municipality where the Central Village is located.[2]

At that time, the post-flood situation was continually discussed during Council meetings in the valley area, yet other municipalities were not officially informed about the plans to build the first barrier. There were rumours, but local inhabitants were mainly concerned about the lack of financial support promised by central authorities a year earlier. Assistance was not provided, as the assessments prepared by province authorities were called into question. Those who could afford to insure at least part of their land and crops found out that the procedure of claiming damages was complicated and that the sums eventually paid out were disappointing. Nevertheless, in the winter of 2011, the local Municipality Council in charge of the area located ahead of the planned barrier issued a resolution calling for the dredging of the Vistula instead of constructing the barrier. Dredging works were conducted in the summer of 2011; the inhabitants who carefully observed the process all agreed that the works were not thorough enough.

Simultaneously, dissent about barriers was growing in local communities. Eventually, one of the inhabitants informally representing the local community wrote a letter to the Regional Agency protesting against the idea of barriers, arguing that if the embankment broke,

the barrier would cause a more violent flood and turn the surrounding area into a polder. An answer came several weeks later in the form of a detailed description of the project. The Regional Agency also stated that it was not responsible for the dredging, because national-level authorities represented by the Central Water Management Authority are in charge of any works related to the river.

A letter distributed among members of the local community triggered immediate resistance. First, in November 2011, 100 people protested against barrier construction in Central Village. The director of the Regional Agency was present and, together with the Mayor of central municipality, he strove to convince the protesters about the benefits of the project. In early December, the Regional Agency—in conjunction with local authorities—organized three meetings at local schools. They followed the same pattern. Planners would present the project and, together with the Mayor of central municipality and the director of the Regional Agency, would try to convince participants that the construction of barriers would have a positive impact on their safety. Local inhabitants would protest, accuse authorities of manipulation, of acting in their self-interest and lying. Eventually, the investor (the Regional Agency) decided to organize what was referred to as 'open consultation' and 'debate'. It was attended by over 700 participants: the gymnastic hall of the local school was packed. The meeting was chaired by the Marshal, that is, the head of regional authorities (and hence the supervisor of the Regional Agency and of the investment process). Three experts were invited to speak to the public. Two planners responsible for project preparation outlined the general idea. None of them was able to finish his speech. With the tumult and agitation in the hall, the Marshal himself hardly managed to take the floor. Eventually, he declared: 'I will not do anything against the people. If you don't want barriers, they will not be built'. Two months later the planning process was discontinued, although this decision was not officially announced to the local community.

The meeting marked the end of the dispute and of the planning process itself. However, the interpretation of the case requires taking into consideration two events that took place after 30 December. In March 2012, a local association was established in order to protect the Central Valley. In January 2013, in southern municipality, the Marshal, the

representative of central authorities, and the Mayors held a meeting in order to discuss the results of efforts taken following the flood and exchange views on the centrally coordinated Programme for Flood Prevention in the Region of Central Vistula, where the idea of barriers reappeared. The Programme was to be subject to public consultation by the end of 2013. Yet, in the spring of 2013, it was interrupted following the suspension of EU grants that were to finance its implementation. In 2017, plans to build barriers were still sitting in the drawer. Since 2010, water levels in winter and spring remain high, but are not a threat to local areas (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Chronology of key events—dispute over building of a flood prevention system

Date	Events
Winter 1981	Vistula flooded the Central Valley
	Plans to divide the valley with barriers (abounded)
	Systematic dredging starts (continues until the early 1990s)
Spring 2010	Vistula flooded the Central Valley
	Financial and non-financial help promised by central government
Summer and Autumn 2010	Flood prevention and measures taken to recover from the flood discussed on numerous occasions during meetings held by local authorities. The construction of barriers briefly discussed
	Local (the central municipality), regional (Regional Agency) and central (Environmental Protection Agency) authorities decided that the first barrier would be built by Central Village
Spring 2011	The Municipality Council in charge of the area located ahead of the planned barrier (southern municipality) issued a resolution calling for the dredging of the Vistula instead of constructing the barrier
	All necessary permits for the investment obtained by the investor (Regional Agency subordinated to the Marshal's office)
Summer 2011	Vice premier visited the area, promised financial help from the central authorities
	The assessments of financial losses prepared by the province authorities were called into question by central authorities. Money was not paid
	Investment contractor awarded in the bidding

(*continued*)

Table 7.1 (continued)

Date	Events
Autumn 2011	A letter of protest was sent to the Regional Agency (investor) by an informal local community representative Investor sends a detailed answer About 100 inhabitants protest against the barrier at its potential location
Winter 2011	Three public meetings at the local schools The local Municipality Council in charge of the area located ahead of the planned barrier (southern municipality) issued a resolution opposing the barrier
Spring 2012	Establishing of a local association with the goal to protect the Central Valley
Winter and Spring 2013	Public meeting discussing the centrally coordinated Programme for Flood Prevention in the Region of Central Vistula. Barriers are part of the programme. Organizers: The Marshal, the Central Authority and the Mayor of central municipality Programme interrupted (EU suspends financing)
Autumn 2017	Responsibilities for water management shifted from local governments to the centrally established agency (the National Water Agency)
Autumn 2017	The treasury and the authorities of a region located south from the Central Valley were sentenced to pay damages for losses caused by the 2010 flood

7.3 Organizational and Individual Level: The Encounter of Old and New Ways of Governing

The decision to build barriers was taken in a moment of crisis, during the 2010 flood. At that time, a temporary barrier erected by a group of over 1500 people saved large areas from demolition. Once the decision was taken, the process was set in motion. The public agency acted systematically: it consulted relevant agencies and obtained all required permits. According to legal provisions in force in Poland, neither the public nor local communities need to be consulted or informed until the project is ready. This is why, when in August 2011 the Mayor of southern municipality was asked about the barriers by one of the councillors, he answered "I have not been approach by regional or central authorities. I have heard nothing about the barriers" (minutes of the Council meeting, August 2011).

The director of the public agency responsible for the investment saw himself and the agency as reacting in a most transparent and cooperative manner. They did not hide anything and when asked, they delivered an in-depth, detailed account; for instance, in the autumn of 2011, in response to a protest letter sent by a local activist, the public agency replied with a long description of the project. The letter explicitly stated that the project and necessary documentation was 70% ready. What one side saw as cooperation, the other considered manipulation. 'They did it in secret', said the Mayor of the southern municipality during an interview, reiterating accusations that were repeatedly raised during public meetings.

In the face of public protests, the agency decided to launch the consultation process. The director of the public agency responsible for the investment process sees consultation as a way of providing local communities with knowledge about floods and melioration systems, which allows them to understand that the proposed solution is suitable. "We have done it as usual: calmly, argumentatively, providing technical and professional information (…) We wanted to explain that we were doing the right thing" (interview, October 2013). By the end of the interview, apparently irritated by the memories, he stated: "it is simple: human stupidity is accepted in order to get some peace, and peace becomes far more important than support for the idea that could turn out to be right" (interview, October 2013).

Similarly, an expert invited to participate in the public debate regarded consultation as counterproductive. When describing the formal procedures of infrastructure planning, he stated: "these… public meetings and discussions, striving towards agreement, it is often the greatest obstacle to getting things done" (interview, November 2013). Both professionals accept consultation as yet another obligation that needs to be met. The public agency director seemed rather confident about how the process was supposed to be handled: one simply needs to be systematic, organize meetings with all communities concerned and present the issue in an argumentative manner. He was upset about the process eventually getting out of hand: the discussion became emotional and meetings concerning a particular area were attended by the inhabitants of neighbouring communes, despite clear instructions of the organizers: "we organized meetings, but often outsiders would come to protest" (interview, October 2013).

The second expert—a university professor—complained that regulations governing public consultation were somewhat confusing, as legal provisions in force do not define the organization of the process.

In the analysed case, although formally conducted, public consultation was not institutionalized. It is true in particular when values behind the idea of inclusion are considered. Nobody regarded stakeholders as individuals who were able to express their opinion and interests in a responsible and informed manner, not to mention admitting that the opinions and knowledge of some participants might have been used to improve the project. Formal regulations requiring inclusion, which could theoretically be construed as an indicator of the governance approach, were enacted and interpreted through the traditional lens of a hierarchical and technocratic approach. In this particular case, the embeddedness of hierarchical logic made public agency immune to change. Immunity to change is in this case particularly striking when we consider the intensity and number of interactions with actors questioning both goals and methods of the governance process. It became obvious that the problem would not be solved without changes to process management. However, instead of looking for new solutions, the public agency decided to withdraw from the project.

The actors on the opposing side have remained engaged. Even after it was decided that the barriers would not be built, they continued to fight for their place in the process of designing and implementing the flood prevention system. Association members monitor all plans and activities related to the regional flood prevention policy. They monitor water levels and regularly check the state of anti-flood embankments and drainage ditches. Whenever possible, they push local authorities and the central water management agency for dredging works. They tried to maintain permanent contacts with all public agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in flood protection operations. However, their engagement was regarded as *inappropriate* at each level. The leader of the association claimed that they were criticized for their "attempts to stick their nose into everything" (interview, March 2014). She adds: "we (the association) are not informed about so many things, even though we have requested it on numerous occasions… Shall I say what I think? I get information because I do not give up. I am just stubborn".

Professionals working for the public agency were not able to accommodate stakeholders' engagement because, in institutional terms, they did not have any ready-made formal or informal procedure (pattern) that would govern the cooperation. On the one hand, in the absence of general conviction about the validity of cooperation with external stakeholders and solving problems together, there was no motivation to experiment with new arrangements. On the other hand, it turned the legally required public consultation into a ritual; it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you think it is counterproductive, this is what it will turn out to be. The case illustrates the interdependence of formal and informal aspects of an institution. Without relevant value-based infrastructure, new procedures are at risk of an inertial drift towards long-established ways of thinking and acting.

7.4 Institutional Result of the Encounter

The public dispute over barriers proves an excellent example of discussing the benefits of problem-centred governance as opposed to task-focus public management (Ansell 2011). From the point of view of relevant regulations, at least three subjects are directly responsible for the management of flood-related issues in the area. First, on the country level, there is the Central Water Management Agency responsible for anything that may happen throughout the course of the river. This agency is responsible for dredging. Second, there is the Regional Agency for Melioration and Water Facilities subordinated to the Marshal (head of the region, the highest level of self-government in Poland) responsible for major flood prevention facilities, such as embankments and barriers. Third, there is the municipality responsible for general safety and the organization of municipality crisis teams, as well as minor water management facilities, for example, drainage ditches. This task-based structure resulted in path dependency of the process (Laws and Forester 2015). Given that the project involves the construction of barriers, the responsible party is the Regional Agency. They commission the preparation of the project and, subsequently, submit the project to consultation. Other tasks related to anti-flood security are left out of the process because they are someone else's responsibility. Despite the protests related to the whole

anti-flood system, the agencies were not able to start cooperation. In the absence of agreement, the Regional Agency called the project off.

However, the analysis of empirical evidence indicates that the public protest was not so much against barriers as it was against the selective approach to the flood prevention system. The Mayor says: "if we considered both…" (interview, March, 2014), the leader of the local community claims: "they would just build one barrier and we would be threatened with an even greater danger than ever before" (interview, March 2014). In terms of the general idea, planners and experts agree that the problem required a complex approach. When it comes to management, they single out specific security measures. The Regional authority representative claims that dredging was not their responsibility and points to serious negligence in this respect over the years, mainly due to the lack of funding. The professor agrees that dredging was necessary, yet due to insufficient funds, it was impossible to address all problems at the same time. The representative of the national agency (responsible for dredging works) and the Mayor who was in favour of constructing barriers suggested that a complex programme needed to be designed, even though neither of them stated who could lead the project.

Thus far, the reaction of public administration to the dissatisfactory results of flood prevention management is rather typical (see Ansell 2011). Instead of adopting multijurisdictional solutions based on the governance idea, they opted for 'more of the same', that is, centralization. In 2013, the competent ministry commissioned the development of a national flood prevention plan. It was not implemented, as the project did not receive funding from the EU. In 2017, the national government decided to create the National Water Agency in charge of water management, which had, thus far, been the responsibility of local government agencies.

In the meantime, the inhabitants of the area which was flooded in 2010 feel that their safety is nobody's concern. The association established by the local community takes every opportunity to approach the national agency about dredging works. Its members monitor embankments that from the formal viewpoint fall within the responsibility of the regional government. Association representatives clear drainage ditches that, technically speaking, are managed by the municipality. When water levels are high, they communicate with the crisis management centre in the municipality, with the fire department, and the meteorological

agency; they act as an information point for the inhabitants. In a sense they took over the responsibilities of public agencies because they did not trust that the latter are able to perform the responsibilities well. At the same time, the feeling of anxiety is constant. The leader of the association recalls a situation when, one Sunday, the Vistula reached alarming levels.

> I received phone calls from people walking along the embankments. They reported that the water level was very high and asked what they should do, whether they should prepare for evacuation or not, I called the crisis unit at the regional agency and was told to call the municipality crisis department. Nobody in the municipality answered. I rang the regional agency unit once again and asked what we should do. The guy did not know, he told me that he could provide me with information on water levels in the area. "I know the water level in the area, you need to tell me what we should do!". Eventually, he gave me the number of the meteorological institute in Warsaw. A very nice lady told me that they were monitoring the situation and she would call me if there was something we needed to do. Within the association, I am responsible for two municipalities, but this situation…I cannot be responsible for all of that, you know what I mean? (interview, March 2014)

Institutions regulating flood prevention systems proved to be unable to solve the problem, because they failed to involve local stakeholders and to break through the silos structure of public agencies responsible for different aspects of the problem. Agencies stepped back leaving a void: *an ungoverned space.* This space was of great importance for the local community, and therefore they tried to fill it with their own actions and attempts to involve responsible public agencies.

7.5 Learning, Governance, and Social Trust

Representatives of the regional agency involved in the process were not surprised by the protests. They had encountered a similar situation in 2005, when they prepared a plan for a "tiny barrier" (Regional Agency Representative, interview, October 2013) in the same valley; the

Municipality Council accepted it, but the project was abandoned due to protests that subsequently broke out. Officials are convinced that—both in these past events, and in the present situation—local inhabitants have fallen victim to demagogy. They believe that demagogy should be fought with reason. First, detailed information was sent in the form of a letter. Subsequently, meetings were organized and attended by the director himself and by planners responsible for the investment to explain the plan to the public. When this failed, an external expert was invited and spontaneous explanations were replaced with structured PowerPoint presentations. A geology professor delivered a lecture on the role of valley barriers in limiting the impact of flood. Those responsible for project design presented as well. The presentation made by one of the planners was entitled 'Variant macro-levelling of Wloclawek reservoir basin as an essential flood prevention measure'. The second came up with a more straightforward title: 'Rationale behind the barrier project in Central Village'. The Marshal of the region was asked to host the meeting. Planners hoped that his authority and reputation would help advance the project. However, neither expert knowledge nor the Marshal's authority proved effective. The professor who participated in the debate recalls:

> The marshal used to be a doctor in the local clinic. Locals respect him tremendously and he has done a lot for the area. He hardly managed to get a word in edgeways! He was almost swearing 'I would not lie to you, you know me! I am your man!' Even he failed to convince them. Then he wanted us to speak, but people were screaming that they did not want to hear anything. (interview, November 2013)

When all the improvements did not work the responsible parties were clueless and eventually stepped back. The Marshal said: "Nothing will be done against your will: if you do not want barriers, there will be none" (newspaper article, January 2013). When recounting the meeting, the professor said he was not surprised by the protest itself, but by its emotional charge. He added:

> after the meeting, the director said to me 'you know what…' – we know each other quite well – '…it is time to retire. It is not worth trying to convince them, it is not worth doing anything. Trying will only make you sick and they will not be convinced anyway.' (interview, October 2013)

Even when reflecting on the situation later on, the regional public agency director claims that there is only one solution: "Education. Education for future generations. Youth need to be aware of the flood risk, of counteracting it and of measures that need to be taken" (interview, October 2013).

At the beginning of the consultation process, when public officials concluded that they were not able to convince local inhabitants, they experienced *a temporary breakdown, which triggered reflection on action* (Yanow and Tsoukas 2011). Yet, when looking for solutions they reverted to the most accessible and firmly embedded logic: the logic of top-down communication. They had a solution (barrier) to the problem (flood) and what was needed—according to this assumption—was an informed consent of the stakeholders. What they felt they needed to learn was how to more effectively convince stakeholders that barriers were the right solution. When closing the discussion about the essence of the problem and other potential solutions they transformed consultation into a path-dependent process; its result was a *lock in phase* (Schreyögg et al. 2011).

Local stakeholders had extensive knowledge about the *context* in which the barrier-building project would be implemented. Plans and promises are made, but often they are not implemented in full; sometimes they are abandoned altogether. The Vistula was systematically dredged over a period of 10 years following the 1982 flood, but dredging works were eventually discontinued after budgetary cuts. Even after the 2010 flood, funds for dragging have been scarce and the 20-year backlog became so great that dragging alone would not be enough. Compensation had been promised, but two years after the flood, it was still not paid and damage claims were called into question. The state of flood prevention facilities, such as embankments and drilling ditches, is unsatisfactory. Relevant services might not be able to react immediately in case of a future flood. Yet the stakeholders are expected to trust the planners and believe that the construction of the first barrier will be followed by subsequent structures protecting the area. They are expected to trust that a potential evacuation will be organized immediately and run smoothly. They are asked to trust that barriers will not be the only flood prevention measure. The Mayor opposing the construction of barriers asks rhetorically "if someone promises to do this or that, but is not doing anything, we don't believe him. Would you?" (interview, March 2014).

7.6 Epilogue

In October 2017, following a collective lawsuit, the treasury and the region were sentenced to pay damages for losses caused by the 2010 flood. They were obliged to pay damages to the inhabitants of the municipality that suffered most. Similarly, inhabitants of the Central Valley were promised financial assistance by the government, but they have never received it. The court found state agencies guilty of neglecting several types of works (dredging, clearing of the space between the river and embankments, embankment maintenance and reconstruction) over a period of one year.

Notes

1. The highest level of local government in Poland. The levels from lowest to highest are: municipality-province-region.
2. The Central Village, where barriers were planned is located in the central municipality. The Mayor of the latter supported the project. Little Village is located in southern municipality. The Mayor of the latter opposed the project.

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8

Towards a Practice-Based Theory of Governance Learning and Institutionalization: A Cross-Case Analysis

An open form of inquiry, combining pre-existent theoretical perspectives with detailed investigation and cross-case comparison of real-life public management processes resulted in the development of a holistic practice-based framework. The framework illustrates learning of a new governance mode and the subsequent institutional change. The analysis is grounded in the new institutionalism in organizational theory and supplemented with organizational learning concepts and new theoretical insights emerging from research. Insights are organized as theoretical propositions and definitions of new theoretical concepts.

Building the linkage between micro, meso and macro levels of analysis is, among others, a major contribution to the existent body of literature on public management, governance, and governance learning. Governance practice is perceived here as a combination of top-down environmental pressures and bottom-up creative responses which, following an initial phase of relative diversity, gradually become organized into more predictive patterns. The analysis that shifts between structure (formal and informal rules regulating behaviour) and agency (individual strategic actions) enables us to capture

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phenomena central to the process of institutional change and learning in public administration, that is, (1) the significance of original institutional environment into which change is introduced; (2) the role of individuals in particular leaders confronted with pressures and demands for a change; and (3) institutionalization processes, within which the new mode of governance is given a specific form and is henceforth taken for granted.

The analysis of cases resulted in the development of theoretical concepts within each of these three areas. In the first area (significance of original institutional environment), it is argued that *coercive pressures* (from legal sources) for governance are not likely to trigger learning, unless they are *complemented with mimetic* and *normative pressures*, that is, pressures stemming from uncertainty and prompting organizations to copy what has proven effective, as well as pressures rooted in approaches and orientations of professional groups. Also within the first area related to the original institutional environment, the concept of *governance void* is introduced. The term draws on the notion of institutional void (Mair et al. 2012) and is understood as a space where institutional infrastructure supporting collaborative forms of governance is absent or weak, for example, there are no ready-to-use tools and procedures coordinating multilevel or multijurisdictional work or public engagement in decision-making processes.[1] Polish institutional context characterized by the dominance of hierarchical relationships and high deficits of social trust provides a useful example of governance void.

Voids become apparent to actors on the ground while they are trying to manage a public dispute, a phenomenon disrupting their routine practices. It happens when public officials discover that standard, traditional ways of proceeding do not get results. The resistance or "backtalk" (Schön 1983, 1987; Yanow and Tsoukas 2009) of material and human environment causes a range of emotional and cognitive reactions like fear, puzzlement, and frustration; for comparison see John Forester's work on practice of planning and conflict resolution (Forester 2009, 2013). This is where the role of individuals and leaders is explored. Public officials' reactions to disruption are analysed through the concept of reflexive practice and the phenomenon of surprise (Schön 1983, 1987; Yanow and Tsoukas 2009), closely linked to the organizational learning perspective. Following an analysis of *surprise phenomenon* in a *collective setting*, I suggest that surprise can be understood as a

cognitive state caused by a disruption of institutionalized patterns of thinking and behaviour deployed by a (public) organization in order to deal with a specific (social) problem.[2] Surprise is regarded as a prerequisite of governance learning, a trigger for innovation with new roles and new procedures in managing the dispute and the social problem behind it (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). Yanow and Tsoukas' theorizing of practitioners' response to surprise is supplemented with *withdrawal* from problem-solving. This type of response is likely to emerge when the community of practitioners and experts is homogenous in their professional orientations, which here are either hierarchical, quasi-market, or New Public Management-like approaches to governance. This kind of homogeneity reinforces the language of certainty (Yanow 2009) about the way in which to manage a certain problem, inhibits learning based on critical inquiry into practice, and limits motivation to improvise and experiment.

Further on, through reference to concepts of *institutional entrepreneurship* and *institutional work*, it is shown how double-loop learning and subsequently institutional change are triggered by individuals. For some individuals, governance voids and top-down institutional pressures create an opportunity to follow their values and expand their resources. The analysis illustrates how public organization leaders, as well as other actors representing public agencies resort to diverse institutional arrangements and use bits and pieces from local organizational, political, and community spheres to fill governance voids. I further describe how interactions of diverse actors and their relationships (e.g. low levels of social trust) result in specific patterns and forms of governance *institutionalization*.

In this chapter, the interpretation of cases is organized as follows. It starts with examining the role environmental pressures played in learning and in the institutionalization of a new governance mode within public agencies under consideration. Using the analytical tools of institutional perspective, I investigate the significance of changes in international and national milieus (e.g. the World Bank or the European Union, national government and its experts), which previously insisted on the economic effectiveness of public services and currently tend to promote inclusiveness and "good governance" (Kordasiewicz and Sadura 2017). I observe how these changes are translated into the level of local governance practices through legal acts (coercive pressures), educational institutions

shaping knowledge and attitudes of professionals (normative pressures), and through observing the examples of other public administration entities enacting public governance rules (mimetic pressures).

Then I link these pressures to the micro-level individual learning processes. The analysis illustrates how public administration workers couple their practices with environmental pressures, how they learn to practice governance and how the type of learning adopted by an individual is grounded in diverse configurations of institutional pressures. It is argued that workers use diverse institutional logics and local meanings creatively, depending on their professional commitments, location within the organizational structure, personal interests, power position, and interactional, on-the-ground decision-making (Binder 2007).

In the next phase of the analysis, the attention shifts from individuals per se to their interactions, within which new approaches to governance are negotiated and become gradually grounded in professional practice, organizational procedures and structures, as well as legal provisions in place. Following the 'inhabited institutions' approach, I picture the meso-level organizational order as emerging from social interactions, and organizations as places where people and groups make sense of, and interpret institutional vocabularies (Binder 2007).

Throughout the analysis, the meso-organizational level is the focus of attention. Yet, the analytical practice could be compared to alternating processes of zooming in and zooming out. For the analysis, it is crucial that organizations are embedded in a specific field where new governance practices are shaped in the process of interactions with external stakeholders: citizens, politicians, community representatives, NGOs, businesses, and other public agencies operating at different administration levels. All actors creatively enact new and old institutions that constitute a given field. Therefore, I begin by tracing environmental influences on the organization. The process of gradually zooming in leads to individuals and their everyday practices. I then zoom out in an attempt to capture the institutionalization process within which an activity that belongs to the individual level (such as learning) is transformed to reach the meso level through social interactions and development of shared understanding and practices.

8.1 From Legal Regulations Enabling Governance to the Practice of Governance: The Complementary Nature of Environmental Pressures for Governance

In Chap. 2, I argue that pursuant to empirical research, the governance turn is observed in many Western and CEE countries (Denters 2011) and that this simultaneous co-evolution of similar patterns of rule in public administration can be perceived as a process of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The new institutionalism approach identifies general environmental factors influencing similarities in changes adopted on the organizational level. These factors, influencing change and homogenization, are grouped into three types of institutional pressures towards isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Pressures are vehicles through which the disjunction between the values held by society and the behaviour of an organization is erased. In other words, within the perspective of new institutionalism, changes in patterns of rule can be interpreted as a result of growing expectations for more responsive and inclusive public governance. In the following considerations, I investigate the impact of these pressures on governance learning processes.

Table 8.1 presents a general overview of cases with the use of four categories central to the overall analysis: inclusiveness and effectiveness of the public management process, presence of learning, presence of different types of pressures, and institutionalization of a new collaborative governance mode. As the analysis will demonstrate, the sole existence of coercive pressure for new governance modes does not guarantee an effective learning of new governance practices. Absence of mimetic and normative pressures effectively blocks learning processes and—in the long run—hinders institutionalization of new public governance as a practice implementing effectiveness and inclusiveness. When positive examples in the organizational field are lacking (mimetic pressures), and there are no professionals who would be (at least partially) socialized within the governance framework (normative pressures), the new governance mode

Table 8.1 Institutional pressures, learning, and institutionalization of governance. Cross-case comparison

		Case 1: schools	Case 2: market	Case 3: WWTP	Case 4: anti-flood facilities
Effectiveness	Was the problem solved (service or product delivered)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	What was the overall satisfaction with the solution (H-M-L)?	Medium	High	Medium	Low
Inclusiveness	Were stakeholders involved in decision-making process?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Was their voice respected and were they invited to work out solutions?	No	Yes	No	No

Coercive pressure	Presence of legal regulations requiring/ enabling the inclusion of various actors into policy-making and policy implementation?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Normative pressure	Presence of professionals educated 'in the spirit' of inclusive approaches to public governance?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Mimetic pressure	Examples of new governance practices in the organizational field?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Learning	Presence of reflexive practitioners (public agency rep) performing double-loop learning?	No	Yes	Yes	No
Institutionalization	Outcomes for governance	Institutionalized as a top-down ruling mode with incidental bottom-up elements	Advancing institutionalization that integrates top-down and bottom-up coordination. Low institutionalization of horizontal coordination (multijurisdictional)		Institutionalized as a top-down ruling mode. Lack of institutionalization of horizontal coordination

drifts into the direction of already established patterns of hierarchical or quasi-market patterns of rule. The tendency is illustrated by the arrows in the table (see Table 8.1).

The first two categories included in the table relate to the value-based promise of public governance to make public management both effective and inclusive (democratic). By using simple indicators combining objective and subjective aspects, I assess the effectiveness and inclusiveness of public dispute resolution and accompanying attempts to solve the social problem that forms the backdrop of the dispute. Effectiveness is assessed on the basis of whether a public service and/or product were eventually delivered and through measuring the overall satisfaction of the parties involved. Low satisfaction means that none of the parties was satisfied with the solution. This was a case of anti-flood facilities, where all stakeholders, including public officials, perceived the process and its outcomes as a complete fiasco. Medium satisfaction means that the degree of satisfaction varies between parties. Examples are the cases of schools and the WWTP, where public officials were satisfied, but some of the stakeholders felt harsh disappointment with the way the process was handled and with its outcomes. High satisfaction means the contentment of all parties involved. This was the case of the dispute over the location of the market. The inclusiveness of the process was assessed on the basis of two dimensions. The first is involvement of stakeholders in decision-making (e.g. inviting them to meetings, seeking their opinion); the second dimension is about openness of the process towards the inclusion of the stakeholders' perspective and their voice in relation to the definition of the problem and the development of a solution. In all cases, stakeholders took part in the decision-making process. However, in most cases, the stakeholders' views neither changed the way in which the problem was perceived by public officials, nor did their perspective matter for solutions eventually proposed within the process. The exception was the market case, where merchants and local community representatives were eventually invited to join a collaborative process of working out a solution development.

Learning is the next category of utmost importance for the overall analysis. Only the double-loop learning is taken into account in the table, as it combines critical reflection with experimenting and enables the

development and design of governance patterns that are both new and most suitable for a given policy problem. The presence of double-loop learning is hence a precondition of good (reflexive) governance, which is understood here as the capacity to reflect on, and rebalance the mix among modes in response to changes in terms of challenges and/or opportunities that exist at the interface of market, state, and civil society (Jessop 2011, see Chap. 2). Double-loop learning is considered as present in cases where public officials responsible for managing a specific problem bear the traits of reflexive practitioners, that is, practitioners willing to reflect on one's action and change its objectives or strategies in order to adopt to (re)emerging governance problems, for example, disagreement of an unexpected form and/or intensiveness.

The latter category explicated in the table is linked to institutionalization, a process within which a structure becomes to be taken for granted by members of a social group as efficacious and necessary; thus it serves as an important causal source of stable patterns of behaviour (Tolbert and Zucker 1996; Surachaikulwattana and Philipps 2017). Each case presents dispute as embedded within a rich history of events taking place before and after the most intense phase of the conflict. The time span covered by the investigation ranges from 6 to 15 years (see the methodological appendix). During this period, collaborative approaches to public management went a long way from relatively new, often contested practices requiring exploration and experimenting to relatively well-structured and obvious practices.

Yet these cases differ significantly in terms of the 'final'[3] form of governance approaches adopted. In the rural municipality (first case), collaborative policy making practices are reduced to something resembling an opinion survey. In the two subsequent cases, that is, disputes over the location of a market and that of a WWTP (both cases from the same large city), the idea of participatory approaches to public management became relatively well established. Public administration is equipped with regulatory and organizational procedures enabling top-down and bottom-up processes of spatial planning, including consultation about diverse investments, especially those with a high environmental impact, budget planning and conflict resolution. Yet the horizontal coordination, linking different depart-

ments and agencies, still relies more on individual social skills of public managers responsible for a given issue than on 'ready-to-wear' organizational solutions, for example, established patterns of communication, explicit inclusion of the horizontal cooperation requirement into the scope of employee duties, and incentives for such cooperation. In the latter case—the dispute over the anti-flood facility—horizontal coordination was a necessity, yet the agency responsible for the investment failed to establish it. Participatory practices were framed, and subsequently institutionalized, as a top-down ruling mode, that is, education about already adopted solutions. Public officials' persistent inability to respond to the expectations and anxieties of the public, as well as their failure to manage the consultation process, led to the rejection and degradation of the idea of collaborative approaches. Public officials perceive these approaches as exposing public management to the risk of demagogy, while in the eyes of the local community they are a smoke screen enabling public agencies to pretend they care about citizens' needs and opinions.

The analysis below focuses on the relationship between institutional pressures and learning. Patterns of learning and institutionalization are subject of analysis in subsequent parts of the chapter.

8.1.1 How Governance Learning Needs Both Force and Enhancement

To a varying degree, coercive pressure, originating from newly introduced legal regulations, was detectable in cases under consideration. In all of them public officials were required to inform, consult, or involve external stakeholders in the decision-making processes or in the implementation of policies. In each of these cases, officials responsible for the process were taking these regulations into account. Yet in each case, they were accused of violating some regulation, of advancing false interpretations, and more generally of ignoring the perspective, values, and interests of the public. This kind of accusation became part of public disputes. Under the pressure of protests regarding goals and/or means of public management, public administration officials experienced uncertainty. They realized that something could impede or even prevent resolution based on old

ways and procedures. Bureaucrats and elected officials were facing the challenge of proposing and learning new ways of organizing decision-making processes.

In two cases no double-loop learning processes were observed, that is, cases were solutions proposed by public officials were not able to break through established, mainly hierarchical, approaches and to propose substantially new ways of developing solutions, based on collaborative and participatory approaches. In the case of schools, the Mayor turned regulations potentially promoting collaborative forms of governance into a 'business-as-usual', top-down management process focused around the efficiency of services provided and consistency with legal regulations. Strong emphasis on the latter translated the idea of consultation into the ritual practice of ticking the boxes (meeting with trade unions—check. With school principals—check, getting the approval of the educational bureau approval—check, parents, community—not mentioned in the regulation, they can therefore be informed about the solution later on). In other words, the original institutional context regulating daily operations of public officials penetrated the learning process by delivering cognitive and normative guidelines on how to adopt a new governance mode. In the case of schools, pressures for inclusion were not intense. Formal institutional structures of local government promoting a strong executive, to the detriment of the legislative, reinforced the dominant position of the Mayor and limited other actors' possibilities to mobilize around the development of alternative interpretations. This configuration of relatively weak pressures for alternatives and institutional structures maintaining power asymmetries enabled a dominant actor to successfully push out dissenting voices and turn the process into a linear procedure where everything is known and planned beforehand. Within such a process, opportunities for learning are scarce, because there is no place for *questioning assumptions*, *bringing alternative definitions*, and *diverse types of knowledge*.

One could assume that learning opportunities would be better if only pressures for participation were greater and power asymmetry less striking. However, the second case, where the double-loop learning was also lacking, forces us to question this hypothesis. Protests over flood-prevention infrastructure were intense, took years and ended up in a spectacular fiasco, namely public agencies' withdrawal from investments

and leaving the entire area at a high risk of inundation. Yet, throughout the long-lasting conflict, public agency was unable to design new approaches to governance with a view to effectively respond to social discontent and mistrust. Public managers' attempts to overcome resistance towards flood barriers were based on a single-loop learning mechanism. The goal they pursued through their actions was neither changed nor questioned from the very start and is aptly expressed in the following statement made by the director responsible for the process: "the goal was to show that what we proposed was right" (interview, October 2013). Attempts to improve were therefore focused on manners in which to communicate more effectively and educate people about plans to build anti-flood barriers. First, the community was informed about the project in a letter. Information was detailed, technical and—according to officials—transparent. It was not received well by the local community. In response to the letter, several public meetings with officials were organized. When face-to-face communication failed, officials decided to invite respected individuals equipped with diverse forms of authority: a university professor as a representative of the academic community, the charismatic and respected marshal of the region, and experts, who had prepared the project—officials believed they were compelling due to their professionalism and academic degrees held. None of these improvements brought expected results—quite the opposite. The level of anger and frustration among the protesters was rising. At this point, officials were clueless and eventually decided to withdraw from the process, leaving both the dispute and the problem of flood prevention unsolved. Moreover, those responsible for the investment process still believe that they either failed in their attempt to convince the public that barriers were needed, or that the public is immune to rational arguments and the process was doomed from the start. Yet, as I argue in the case analysis, for those opposing the investment, the discussion should not have related only to barriers, but also the entire flood-prevention system and public agencies' unreliable performance in the past. These perspectives could not converge in a constructive discussion without redefining the problem, and therefore redefining the goals of public management in this particular case. All those involved in the process knew something should have been done differently. But how? Not knowing what to do, those responsible

for the investment where first running in circles of single-loop learning, and eventually stepped back.

It is not enough to prescribe legally what needs to be done; there need to be people who understand and/or share original values behind legal guidelines, as well as practical examples of such new practices within the organizational field. These two conditions correspond to two remaining types of institutional pressures, that is, normative and mimetic. Their meaning and role in the learning processes are explained through the analysis of cases where double-loop learning eventually took place.

Initial stages of dispute in the case of market location and WWTP followed a similar single-loop learning path. In the case of the market, city authorities tried, over and over again, to win over the communities and municipalities by inviting them to discuss the project whose basic assumptions were non-negotiable. Eventually, the process slowed down and ground to a halt. For a period of almost two years, city administration took no action. In the case of WWTP, authorities strove to inform the public about the project, just as in the case of flood-prevention facilities. While learning new practices of participatory governing, they were still using old hierarchical reasoning. Stakeholders were invited to participate so that they could be convinced about the validity of the proposed solutions, not to contribute to them.

In both cases (market and WWTP) findings suggest that the goal of learning did not need to be attained in order to ensure excellence in the delivery of public goods and services; rather, it was necessary to gain new tools and arguments in the struggle over regaining legitimacy and over control in a policy domain. Gilardi and Radaelli (2012) call learning for legitimacy, which does not improve policy performance, 'symbolic learning', while learning for maintaining control is referred to as 'political learning'. In these two cases, both forms of learning were observed.

The breakthrough was possible, because normative and mimetic pressures complemented coercive pressures. Crucially, in both cases in which double-loop learning took place, professionals whose approaches and orientations were, at least partially, formed by collaborative and participatory governance ideas. They were both employees of public administration and external experts. In a dispute over the market location, a central role was played by the new Vice President, whose appearance brought an end to a

two-year impasse and initiated a new, collaborative process of market planning. In addition, the presence of a number of other important figures brought to light the participatory logic in the dispute. One of them was the municipality Mayor, a tireless, though sometimes counterproductive, supporter of public participation.[4] There were researchers from the Polish Sociological Association, who experimented with mediation in order to solve the dispute. In the case of WWTP, the most intense and long dispute among those under analysis, there were two directors of city administration departments and the director of a regional agency lobbying for participatory approaches, as well as a professional mediator eventually employed by the investor. Importantly, all individuals mentioned, with the exception of the Vice President in the market case, failed in their attempts to solve the dispute. Their strategic actions were however significant in the long run, because they paved the way for the institutionalization of participatory approaches to governance (the issue explored in the following sections).

All of these individuals were 'carriers' of normative pressures towards a new participatory governance mode percolating into various institutions training public administration employees and those in related professions. Some of them participated in externally funded workshops organized at the local, national, and international level devoted to public dispute resolution, participatory planning, and public consultation. Others were relatively fresh graduates of social sciences (e.g. political sciences, sociology, social policy), or had done post-graduate studies in public management, where they became familiar with various concepts of participatory democracy.

Membership in various, often cross-sectoral professional networks exposed them, as well as other public officials, to mimetic pressures. When talking about the gradual dissemination of participatory practice, a director within the city administration said

> There is a competition between local governments. We have this association called the Union of Polish Cities. Representatives of local administration meet there and exchange their experiences. Then people come back and say "What an interesting thing they have done there! We are going to do the same, only better". (Social Communication Department, interview, June 2013)

Being embedded in communities of practitioners, permeated at least to certain degree with ideas of participatory democracy, alternative dispute resolutions, collaborative planning and the like, nurtures individuals with practical ideas about ways in which to implement regulations and solve emerging problems. Finally yet importantly, it incentivises and legitimizes experimentation.

While coercive pressures derive from legal sources, normative and mimetic pressures are rooted in diverse educational institutions (e.g. university curricula), research and policy programmes (e.g. financed by the EU or the European Economic Area grants), professional networks, and communities (e.g. local governments, partnerships, associations). It is an institutional infrastructure supporting the creation of leaders skilful in managing multi-stakeholder collaborations for public goals (Sørensen and Torfing 2015), educating new professionals or preparing those who have exerted the profession of a mediator or facilitator to support the transformation of governance.

Taking the above into account, how do the three institutional pressures influence governance learning processes? Coercive pressures legally bind public officials to include participatory tools into certain types of decision-making processes. New regulations challenge them to do things differently and potentially trigger learning process. The process of learning is accelerated through indirect coercive pressures, namely: regulations empower stakeholders to legitimately claim their right to be heard and involved in governance processes. The indirect pressure exerted by empowered stakeholders accelerates the learning process, because it helps public officials to identify a given situation as potentially requiring the adoption of a new governance approach. Protests and claims come across as a surprise (Schön 1983)—a routine-breaking phenomenon.

The following figure illustrates the relationship between institutional pressures and governance learning. Figure's nested, Russian doll-like structure suggests that public organization is embedded in a number of larger fields; here, within a local field where other public and non-public organizations interact following institutionalized rules of the game, and larger, national and international field with its own actors, for example, governments, international organizations and the like. The figure illustrates a situation where all pressures making learning possible are present. In the following sections, the nested structure will be explored: we will

open up/dissect an organization and look at it as a 'nest' and an immediate context for collective action, as the subsequent services and departments provide a 'nest' for individuals (Fig. 8.1).

To sum up, legal regulations introducing collaborative patterns of governance in public administration create direct and indirect pressure on local practices. Direct pressures mean that public officials are legally bound to include certain steps into decision-making processes. In terms of learning, indirect pressures seem to be far more important. Legal changes towards governance create legitimate pressure groups, who can claim their right to be involved in governance. The more powerful the pressure groups are, the greater the probability that their alternative perspectives and knowledge will open up space for critical reflection on governance. Yet a coercive pressure, even if accelerated by a dispute potentially triggering critical reflection, does not suffice to push the learning process forward. Therefore, I propose:

Proposition 1 Coercive pressures trigger governance learning processes and provide reasons for governance learning, but as such do not guarantee double-loop learning.

In all analysed cases, initial stages of public dispute were characterized by single-loop learning mechanisms at best. Yet, the change in practices was accompanied by old ways of thinking and/or directed rather at maintaining control over policy issues and not necessarily at improving performance. A qualitative change in approach was possible, because coercive pressures were accompanied by mimetic and normative pressures that delivered instruction defining *how* things could be done. It is through these pressures that officials learn to think differently.

Proposition 2 Mimetic and normative pressures push learning processes forward through delivering examples of new practices in the organizational field and by shaping professional orientations and attitudes consistent with the new governance mode.

Proposition 3 Without the support of normative and mimetic pressures, governance learning tends to be performed as 'fake learning' (political,

Fig. 8.1 Institutional pressures and governance learning

symbolic learning) that is, learning oriented not towards gaining excellence in the delivery of public goods and services, but towards regaining legitimacy and maintaining control over a given policy field.

8.2 Between Structure and Agency: On the Significance of the Institutional Context for Individual Responses to Disruption

As argued in Chap. 3, the explanation of the governance turn and learning based on Powell and DiMaggio's framework of institutional pressures is relevant mainly on the macro and meso levels of analysis. However, it fails to take into account the micro level of individual practices and perceptions. It also ignores the process of transforming the micro-level answers into meso- and macro-level structures, which is of key importance for the analysis of organizational learning and institutionalization processes. This is why the top-down approach of new institutionalism is complemented here with the bottom-up approach focusing on the role of actors in creating, maintaining, transforming, and disrupting institutions.

First, I propose to interpret the phenomenon of public dispute from the perspective of professional and reflexive practice (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009; Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011). Disputes have the potential of delivering a breakdown of a default activity, thus far taken for granted, and illuminate the logic behind it. Disagreement forces professionals to reflect on their own practices and to improvise responses (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009; Laws and Forester 2015). I am interested in extending the concept of reflexive practice into *a collective setting* by investigating how original patterns of action and responses to a disruption can be linked to normative and cognitive pillars of institutions. What happens when responses enter into interaction with the environment?

Yanow and Tsoukas distinguish different types of responses to disturbances interrupting routine practice (2009). Routine practice—marked by an absence of disturbances (surprises)—is characterized by absorbed coping, that is, performing a set of established activities based on tacit,

experiential knowledge. Routine is not mindless, yet it is too close and too familiar to compel attention. Developing Donald Schöns' concept of surprise (Schön 1983, 1987) and Dreyfus' model of knowledge-based work (Dreyfus 1991), Yanow and Tsoukas argue that there are different kinds of disturbances (surprises), ranging from 'malfunction', to 'temporary breakdown', to 'total breakdown'. Each one elicits a different type of improvisational response, ranging from 'non-deliberate' (spontaneous readjustments), to 'deliberate', to 'thematic' (explicitly intentional). When routine is disrupted by malfunction (first type of disturbance), the practitioner shifts her attention to what she is doing, corrects the action and returns to routine practice. This kind of response is called *reconstituted absorbed copying*. The second type of disturbance, that is, a temporary breakdown results in *deliberate coping*: the practitioner is now paying careful attention to the task at hand. An *involved deliberation* is an alternative response to temporary breakdown and entails a more focused consideration of what is being done. Practitioner "stops and considers what is going on and plans what to do, all in a context of involved activity" (Dreyfus 1991, p. 72). Difference between deliberate coping and involved deliberation is a matter of degree, not of quality. Both responses still take place against the background of absorption in the world and, in this sense, are not a detached cognitive reflection (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009, p. 1352). At this point, however, the availability of tools enabling practice becomes questionable and a subject of reflection. Total breakdown is the third type of surprise. It results in a response called *thematic intentionality*, a more analytic or theoretical reflection. This kind of response enters the scene when "involved deliberation is no longer effective or operative, we need to move to a detached analytic (cognitive, theoretical) stance on the problem as we try to comprehend the underlying mechanisms involved" (2009: 1352).

The first three types of responses (reconstituted absorbed copying, involved deliberation, detached intentionality) correspond to single-loop learning. The last type (thematic intentionality) resonates with the double-loop learning concept, because analytical reflection is needed in order to uncover hidden assumption of own practice, question them and design new goals and means of practice. How does this theoretical fram-

ing help us to understand responses to public protests, institutional change, and learning processes accompanying the 'governance turn'? And, how can this framing be modified in order to capture the *structuralist moments of responses*, that is, moments where improvised responses are infiltrated by institutionalized patterns of thinking and acting?

8.2.1 Entering Single-Loop Learning

Let us try to classify public officials' responses to protests according to Yanow and Tsoukas' typology ranging from spontaneous readjustments to detached, analytical reflection. Already at the very beginning of the analysis, it turns out that a collective setting emphasizes an important quality of surprise, that is, its openness to social construction processes. What might be surprising for some is not a surprise for others. The observation is not new; Yanow and Tsoukas admit that surprise "requires a degree of mindful openness or 'permeability' that enables perceiving an 'event' as surprising" (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009). Here I argue that mindful openness can be influenced by institutions.

In cases under consideration, a continuum of responses is opened by a situation in which a protest—a phenomenon perceived in the research as the incarnation of disruption—was not perceived as a disruption by actors in the field/the stakeholders. When deciding about the delegation of schools, the Mayor and her supporters were not surprised by the protests and they proceeded without taking the dissenting voices into account. The use of institutionalized (routine) patterns of rules grounded in the concepts of representative democracy, New Public Management, and bureaucratic rule of law enabled them to 'naturalize' protests as a normal reaction to an unpopular policy decision. One of the councillors, supporting the Mayors' strategy, stated in an interview:

> *We were able to work out an optimal solution. Currently, the general mood here is not as bad as you could expect. The municipality had anticipated a far worse situation, including calls for a referendum or for the dismissal of the local government*. (June 2013)

The dispute forced the Mayor *to articulate* the logic behind the practice, but not to change the practice itself. Actors questioning goals and means of governance were able to neither mobilize wider support nor refer to an alternative framing of the decision-making process. In fact, when questioning the adopted patterns of management, dissidents tried to use the logic imposed by the Mayor, and hence their attempts were doomed to failure.

Proposition 4 Since old (original) institutions penetrate practitioners' thinking and acting, they can also prevent practitioners from recognizing a phenomenon as a surprise, and hence prevent the learning of a new governance mode.

In the remaining cases (market, WWTP, barrier), at first, practitioners regarded protests as a malfunction. Initial reactions of authorities followed the strategy of 'more of the same' (single-loop learning and reconstituted copying) or, in other words, the implementation of minor changes. They used the bureaucratic logic based on the rule of law to legitimize the exclusion of stakeholders' from the decision-making process and to prove that all measures required by the law had been taken. That is, all informing procedures were conducted and the comments of those entitled to be party in the administrative process were answered. Despite these attempts, protests endured. Importantly, in all four cases protesters used a framework of different institutional logics to interpret the same legal and procedural rules. While officials focused on following the letter of law, protesters reasoned in terms of collaborative and participatory logic.

Gradually, disruptions started to present themselves to practitioners as a temporary breakdown. Officials enacted involved deliberation by paying more and more attention to their actions, which they modified in order to accommodate at least some of the protesters' voices. Still, new practices were permeated with old institutional logics, for example, in the cases of WWTP and barriers, where decision-makers perceived consultation as education. Involved deliberation also included an instrumental use of participatory practices to restore legitimacy, for instance in the WWTP case, where the President of the city first ordered an admin-

istrator trial, opening a public discussion about the project and then issued a building permission an unchanged form, or in the market case, where officials enabled the consultation of the project whose very existence was contested.

Proposition 5 Initial responses to a surprise tend to follow adjustments prompted by the most accessible, dominating institutional logic regulating the practice of governance. Modified and new practices are pervaded by original patterns of thinking and acting.

Over time, enduring exposure to conflict and exposure to the alternative definitions of the problem made practitioners aware of the fact that tools they had at their disposal might be inadequate and would not let them solve the problem. Detached cognitive reflection and a total breakdown seem to be at arm's length. Since an involved deliberation is no longer operative, the only remaining option is experimenting with new approaches. Or is it? Analysis shows that the logic of a logician is not the logic of a practitioner (Bourdieu 1990; Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011).

The case of barriers and—to a certain extent—also the case of market location, are examples of a situation where, faced with the inability to solve the problem, practitioners decide to *step back* and redirect their attention towards other problems. The complexity of the context in which they function (Weick 2003) makes this option feasible. In the case of the market, the first Vice President did not risk any significant losses in terms of legitimacy when he decided to abstain from action for almost two years. Merchants and local community representatives were just one of many groups involved in the many decision-making processes he had supervised over the years. To a lesser extent, the same holds true in the case of officials involved in the barrier-planning process, since their accountability for this particular exercise was clearer. Yet they had been quite successful in playing the "blame game" (Hood 2011). Through attributing the blame for failure to protesters, and by insisting that dredging works demanded by the inhabitants remained outside of agencies' competence, they could 'save the face' while withdrawing from the investment.

A closer look at *withdrawal* reactions suggests that they can be interpreted as reactions to uncertainty, which is linked to the phenomenon of

surprise. Uncertainty is caused by the conviction that all ready-made procedures (patterns) that may be conducive to solving the problem, as well as their modified variants, have already been exhausted. A practitioner cannot think of any other ways in which the problem could be solved under given circumstances, or they feel they lack the necessary competence, understood both formally and individually, to further engage in the process. Conflict itself further contributes to this kind of uncertainty, as it involves diverse stakeholders with divergent interests and values, whose actions are, to a large extent, unpredictable and call for improvised answers (Laws and Forester 2015). It is a situation radically different from the relatively high predictability guaranteed by designing the process pursuant to a legalist approach. At this point, emotional responses come to the surface, including reactions of anxiety and fear. It is particularly evident in the case of market location, where *fear* became a significant category organizing the narrative about old and new public management strategies. Describing the governance practices enacted by city authorities in the initial phases of the conflict, the Mayor of the district states: "City authorities do not talk to people. They are afraid of people (…) I can see fear in their eyes when something like this happens: protests, openly expressed dissatisfaction of certain groups" (March 2013). The new Vice President, who eventually solved the conflict, reflects "there is a moment where you just need to accept the challenge and not be afraid to engage in a dialogue" (June 2013). A mediator involved in managing the dispute remarks: "many of these meetings are very unpleasant or even endangering. This experience accumulates and creates fear among the representatives of authorities. They fear direct interactions with inhabitants and avoid them" (January 2013). The street-level bureaucrat who was responsible for organizing the temporary relocation of the market mentions: "The new Vice President comes to the market himself! He is not afraid. You would not see the former Vice President there! (laughs)" (September 2013).

The exploration of interlinkages between emotional and cognitive dimensions of institutions is important for understanding the reaction of withdrawal. Empirical data delivers an illustration of how efforts to challenge established expectations of governance practices "threaten the individual's sense of security" (Powell 1991, p. 194). The above considerations are summarized in the following theoretical proposition:

Proposition 6 When gradually exhausting responses based on deliberate copying and involved deliberation, practitioners (public officials) face uncertainty of the decision-making context and, consequently, display emotional reactions of anxiety. A possible reaction is *withdrawal* instead of engagement into thematic intentionality.

Further on, I will argue that emotional reactions to uncertainty, including reactions of anxiety and fear are the function of an institutional void. After trying out all possibilities that appeared feasible and legitimate to them, public officials find themselves in an almost physically experienced emptiness. There are no other ready tools or procedures coordinating multilevel or multijurisdictional work, or tools coordinating public engagement in decision-making processes. In cases under analysis, which refers to the Polish institutional environment, a collaborative, network-based logic, which could inspire and justify further modifications of tools, is far from dominating in any arena of public life, be it a workplace, a local community, or the political sphere (see Chap. 3). Hence, this logic is not at hand, it is not built into the "habits of the heart" (Bellah et al. 1985) or into long-lasting experiences of social actors (Putnam et al. 1993) and, as a result, does not provide much inspiration. In order to practice collaborative forms of governance in these cases, public officials would have to take a leap of faith, start to construct new tools or implement those already in use, yet according to a different logic. Initiating new practices or redefining old ones would mean improvise, performing "bricolage" or "making do" with whatever is at hand (Mair and Marti 2009; Mair et al. 2012; Forester 2009, 2013; Laws and Forester 2015). It would involve critical reflection and double-loop learning. Practitioners engaging in this kind of activities would work in and around *governance voids* in order to eventually close them. Not all practitioners are ready to do this. When faced with a void, many of them step back. In Yanow and Tsoukas' terms, the key question is: what makes practitioners willing to perceive a disturbance as a total breakdown and, subsequently, what makes them prone to respond with detached reflection upon mechanisms of the situation at hand, and what entices them to explore new possibilities? Before we embark upon the analysis of the 'bricoleurs of

governance', let us take a closer look at the void that is the object of their engagement.

8.2.2 Governance Void

First of all, I argue that the void that practitioners are facing is of institutional nature. Mair, Marti, and Ventresca suggest that institutional voids occur "amidst institutional plurality and are the intermediate outcome of conflict and contradictions among local political, community, and religious spheres" (Mair et al. 2012, p. 820). This perspective seems to be more suitable then perceiving voids only as spaces where certain institutions are absent or weak. It is because governance, as a certain idealized concept and approach to public management, is introduced into a field that is already governed by diverse political and community institutions. Even when certain institutions of governance are non-existent or weak (e.g. patterns for multijurisdictional coordination and inclusion of the public into decision-making processes), a given field (e.g. anti-flood facilities) is being regulated within complex local arrangements and interdependences, with formal and informal institutions influencing individual practices, as it is already shown in the analysis above.

Definition Governance void is a space where direct and/or indirect institutional infrastructure supporting collaborative forms of governance is absent or weak (underdeveloped), and where the contradiction of institutional logics provides inspiration on how to manage a given public issue.

Two examples of the governance void are outlined below. The first example relates to an *explicit* lack of institutionalized tools that officials could use in order to enact a new governance mode. The second example illustrates the existence of the void within a larger institutional infrastructure regulating collective action within the Polish context.

Governance understood in a narrow sense (as a governance mode based on mainly networks, see Chap. 1) by definition involves the coordination of diverse stakeholders: across levels of administration, across diverse departments of the same public organization, as well as across

diverse organizations. To a large extent it requires an approach that is problem-centred and not task-centred (Ansell 2011). Yet, those formally responsible for the planning process in the case of the market and in the case of anti-flood facilities had neither legal and organizational tools nor enough power to implement this approach. In the first case, the planning process should have been coordinated by the Mayor. According to formal regulations, it was the Mayor's task to coordinate the four entities across different government levels and jurisdictions, with the actions of external stakeholders. These were real estate departments at municipality and city level, the bureau of architecture (city), the investor (city-owned construction company), and the merchants and local community representatives. The new Vice President, who eventually took over the responsibility and successfully finalized the process, admits that despite of the fact that the Mayor was formally accountable for the process, he did not have the necessary tools (e.g. procedures) to secure and enforce cooperation of the four public administration entities listed above. He mentions that department directors within the city and municipality administration are neither used to coordinating their actions nor are they held accountable for that (see Chap. 5 for details), and that the competence of coordinating the processes rests with the highest levels of organizational structure occupied by the President or Vice President. After stating this generalized observation, he continues with an example from his own professional experience.

> Before I became the Vice President, I was the head of a department whose operation depended entirely on cooperation: it was responsible for acquiring European funds. I can tell you that we went through hell. It was OK if I spoke to someone and the person understood that I needed something from them, and they needed something from me. But if the head of the department was… reluctant… a phone call to the President was necessary. The President had to persuade the person to work with me.[5] (interview, June 2013)

In other words organizational structures (procedures, motivation systems) enabling horizontal and vertical coordination were lacking and the successful coordination was dependent on *individual skills* and the *posi-*

tion of power, observation that will be further explored later on in the analysis (see considerations on institutional entrepreneurship, Sect. 8.3).

In the case of anti-flood facilities, problem-centred approach would require 'the owner of the process' (regional agency) to coordinate action with municipalities, a national-level agency and external stakeholders, such as local community organizations and individual citizens. In both cases (the market and anti-flood facilities), further action would require from those formally responsible to go beyond their competences—an act involving high individual and organizational risks. In these kinds of situations, practitioners face a paradox described by Chris Ansell as a large gap between low discretion, that is, what public officials are legally allowed to do, and high responsibility that is, being responsible for effectively solving public problems (Ansell 2011). This gap is one of the manifestations of the *governance void*.

Even if network-based coordination of relationships between different actors within and outside of public administration is not explicitly built into its organizational structures, the institutional environment may deliver a more or less productive ground for establishing such ways of coordination. As already mentioned (see Chap. 3), traditionally speaking, horizontal ways of governing are not typical of the Polish institutional environment. As a result, new collaborative and participatory approaches to governance are interpreted according to the traditionally adopted hierarchical logic, or to relatively new, but firmly embedded quasi-market logic of New Public Management. Lack of examples proving that horizontal coordination and partnerships may bring desired outcomes not only confines imagination about the realm of the possible, but also reduces resources necessary to initiate cooperation, most prominently social trust (Ostrom 1990; Putnam et al. 1993). The latter is built in the course of collective actions, for instance within civil society initiatives aimed at solving local problems, or 'only' at organizing collective leisure, or within citizens-government interactions taking place during gatherings in local communities. Practising cooperation turns it into a value worth pursuing. In this sense, each attempt to solve local problems is path-dependent, influenced by the history of mutual relationships and past decisions (Forester 2017; Schreyögg et al. 2011), which determines

the scope of choices accessible to actors involved in the governance process.

The path-dependency of the governance process and the significance of social trust as a factor affecting its success are most clearly visible in the case of the dispute around anti-flood facilities. Officials did not have any good experiences with participatory processes (rather the opposite), they did not value cooperation with stakeholders per se, and they did not expect to learn anything from them. As a result, they were not motivated to experiment further with consultation. Once they had come to the conclusion that it was impossible to convince the local community, they stepped back. Regional agency officials and experts involved in the planning process had a solution (barrier) to the problem (flood), and what they thought they needed to proceed was an informed consent of the stakeholders. What they felt they needed to learn was how to convince the stakeholders more effectively that the barrier was the right solution. The contested barrier was an important part of a wider system. Several new barriers were to be constructed in the following years. The regional agency was supposed to perform additional services, namely dredging of the bottom of the Vistula River.

For the local community the problem was not the flood or even the barrier itself, but the unreliability of public agencies. As one of local activists put it: "We did not believe them. We will be left to our own devices. If there was a crisis and no money was available, no other barriers would be built (except for this one)"[6] (interview, March 2014). Over the years, local stakeholders learnt that plans and promises are made, but they are often not implemented in their entirety; sometimes they are abandoned altogether. Dredging was supposed to be conducted on a regular basis, yet it was discontinued for 20 years because of budgetary cuts. After the disaster of 2010, national authorities promised compensation to those affected by the flood, but no money was paid and claims for damages were challenged. The state of existent flood-prevention facilities, such as embankments and drilling ditches, was unsatisfactory.[7] Critically, barriers would require an immediate and efficient evacuation in case of a flood. A statement of the Mayor who opposed the barrier deserves reiteration: "if

someone promises to do this or that, but does nothing, we don't believe him. Would you?" (interview, March 2013).

In the analysis of the case (see Chap. 7), I argue that the perspective of these two parties, that is, the local community and public officials could not converge into a constructive discussion of the problem and, therefore, the goals of governance in this particular case are not redefined. In other words and according to the theoretical frameworks of good governance, metagovernance, and learning, critical reflection was needed in order to question the methods and goals of the planning process. No reflection took place. The problem remained unsolved. Yet, even if reflection had occurred, restoring the trust among the stakeholders of the process would require great facilitation and mediation efforts.

Paraphrasing Kenneth Arrow, one can say that social trust is an important lubricant of the governance system. Its absence, as well as the absence of institutions incentivising network-based cooperation in diverse areas of social life, constitutes deeper levels of the governance void. Here we should emphasize that it is not only officials who need to learn collaborative approaches. Since the idea of public governance is the inclusion of external actors into governance processes, these external actors also need to learn how to function within this new context and to perceive participation not only as a right, but also as *responsibility*. In the process of participation, external stakeholders can learn about both possibilities and limitations of designing public policy and public services. If their participation is not treated seriously, like in the case of barriers, they are only learning that if they protest intensively enough, they can stop any government initiative. Blocking an initiative does not, however, solve the problem. This kind of result is suboptimal, since the goal behind collaborative approaches to governance, and behind participation in decision-making in particular, is to design possible solutions to a problem using diverse sources of knowledge and exploring different needs and perspectives. The aim should be to expand the scope of choices for those participating in the decision-making process, not to reduce the choice to accepting or rejecting a pre-given solution.

8.2.3 Entering Double-Loop Learning: From a Reflexive Practitioner to an Institutional Entrepreneur

After having delineated the institutional background of practitioners' withdrawal from problem-solving, I now come back to the question: what makes practitioners willing to perceive a disturbance as a total breakdown and, subsequently, what induces them to engage in detached, critical reflection upon the mechanisms governing the given situation, and in an active exploration of new possibilities?

Analysis of the cases suggests that critical reflection and experimentation emerged in contexts where practitioners responsible for a given governance process were exposed to *institutional ambiguity*, that is, the existence of conflicting frames of interpretation suggesting the manner in which to manage the problem and the goals of the management process. Importantly, sources of ambiguity triggering double-loop learning were located *within* public organization, or at least *within* the epistemic community of professional and academic experts, sharing normative orientations and knowledge on possible actions and desired outcomes (Haas 1992). As literature on institutional change suggests, shared understandings of institutional assumptions may exist to differing degrees and may shift over time (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). In the situation of a protracted dispute and inability to solve the problem on the basis of old approaches to governing processes, the responsibility for the process will more probably be delegated to alternatively oriented actors. For the authorities, the existence of alternatively oriented actors becomes an opportunity for regaining the effectiveness of action, restoring the legitimacy of public agency, and getting things done.

At this point of the analysis, the use of the reflexive practice model as describing an individual experience becomes even more challenging than before. It is because the most striking observation is that together with a change of logic, a constellation of actors involved in the governance learning process is shifting. On the operational level, those who have failed to solve the problem with the use of a specific logic are not those who have introduced the practice rooted in the new logic. Top decision-makers implicitly

commission the change of logic by allowing new actors to enter the stage. In the cases under consideration, they commission the change not because they think or believe that this problem should be dealt with in a collaborative way, but because all accessible alternatives have been exhausted.

The process of perceiving a disturbance (public dispute) as a total breakdown and responding with detached reflection is extended in time and takes place rather on the meso level of social interactions than on the micro (individual) level. It is not so much about individuals experiencing an "aha moment" and altering their own practices, as it is about individuals discovering their own limitations and realizing that it is necessary to engage actors who think differently. The observation of double-loop learning—to a greater extent than single-loop learning—allows us to understand that learning is a social process. Actors learn new approaches through interaction. Within interaction, they challenge each other's views instead of supporting and reinforcing them, as it is the case in single-loop learning.

The two cases in which double-loop learning took place illustrate the social nature of the learning process and, in particular, how double-loop learning is facilitated by the *heterogeneity of actors' orientations* within public organization and, more generally, within networks of practitioners and academic experts. In the case of market location, there were two moments in which traditional, hierarchical logic was replaced with the new collaborative logic and the process of double-loop learning began. The first was the moment when the first Vice President allowed academic researchers from the PSA to take control of the process. The second was the appointment of the new Vice President, whose professional orientation, just as the orientation of academics from the PSA, was aligned with the ideological orientation of the concept of collaborative and participatory approaches to governance.

Importantly, the first attempt to introduce alternative logic into the governance system proved a failure. The first Vice President allowed the PSA to take control of the process, assigned an official representing the city in the mediation, and stepped back. The disappearance of a major decision-maker impeded the learning process, because it was a signal that alternative governance practices were not actively supported by the top manager who, in this case, was also a decision-maker. Public officials,

including the person assigned to take part in the mediation as a representative of the city, felt insecure and irritated by the new situation and persistently reverted to the original logic by arguing that "the procedure described by mediators was not defined in regulations governing the work of city authorities" (an open report prepared by the researchers, 2012). This particular situation helps us to pinpoint the issue considered central to the "governance turn" (Gilardi and Radaelli 2012). It involves experimenting with the roles of diverse actors in decision-making. Yet there are important limitations when the role of the government is concerned. Even if participative decision-making takes place, and even if non-governmental actors implement strategic public objectives, the government still should have a steering role (Pierre and Peters 2000; McLaverty 2011; Osborne and Gaebler 1992). The director of the Social Communication Department, who was implicitly involved in the process,[8] summarizes the lesson from this experience by saying that city authorities should not have withdrawn and taken the role of a party in the mediation process, "instead, they should have played the role of the host" (interview, June 2013) who invites the public to participate and listens to its opinions, and eventually makes a decision.

The new Vice President entered the scene when the experiment with mediation was still ongoing. He refused, however, to step into the former Vice President's shoes, and took back control of the process. He constructed a new temporary structure (a working group) on the interface of city administration, municipality administration, and external stakeholders' organizations. He established communication channels between all relevant officials, councillors, politicians, and the working group. The process of designing solutions for the market was personally coordinated by the Vice President. Importantly, although the new Vice President shared the ideological orientation of collaborative and participatory approaches to governance, at that time, he had had no experience in governing multi-stakeholder processes. This is how he describes the encounter with protesters:

> There were eight meetings and, to be honest, the first two were totally wasted in terms of any work on the design. These meetings ended very emotionally. I must admit, *I have learnt* that it makes no sense to expect

> that in a conflict situation parties just meet, talk and solve the problem. It does not work this way. These are strenuous processes; you really need to bleed and sweat in order to arrive at something. For me it really is *a personal success* that we were able to peacefully move the merchants to a temporary location and start modernization works. (interview, June 2013)

What makes the new Vice President prone to learn new governance mode and experiment are *social skills*[9] (Fligstein 2001; Fligstein and McAdam 2012) and a strong *conviction* that involving external stakeholders is the right thing to do (individual conditions). His *formal position of power* accelerates his agency, because it makes other people follow him (structural condition). The institutional and organizational context of his actions makes him something more than a reflexive practitioner, he becomes *an institutional entrepreneur* who fills the governance void by: (1) initiating divergent changes (here: changes following an alternative governance logic); and (2) actively participating in the implementation of these changes (Battilana et al. 2009).

The WWTP case provides yet another example, illustrating how ambiguity of new governance institutions and the presence of actors delivering alternative framings open up a space for double-loop learning (and subsequent institutional change, as will be argued in the next section). Governance mode enacted by public officials responsible for the planning process did not serve ideas, needs, and interests of individual citizens, local communities, and civil organizations and—most importantly—some of the individuals and departments *within* the city administration.

In a response to coercive pressures (changes in law) taking place in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some organizational structures were created, whose role was to maintain communication channels with general public and non-governmental organizations. These structures involved a small department for public dialogue and certain new responsibilities regarding information and consultation were delegated to existing departments. The conflict around the WWTP, one of the longest and most intensive public disputes in the city's recent history, infused these structures with new energy. The 'inhabitants' of these structures, that is, public officials employed within new departments and officials equipped with new

responsibilities had an opportunity to justify their own existence and increase resources at their disposal. As introduced in the case description (Chap. 6), the investor, that is, a city-owned company supported by some of the officials, tried out many novel participatory tools and mechanisms, such as a special position on the company's executive board (i.e. the board's plenipotentiary for social obligations), the organization of meetings with the parties in the administrative trial, the creation of the Social Council with the purpose of investment monitoring and, last but not least, the employment of a mediator. Public officials and professionals involved in the process were learning how to use new, participatory governance tools, yet they were *not* successful in resolving the dispute. Crucial decisions were made without public participation, and despite being contested by the public, they proved irreversible. In this sense, the process was locked in through past decisions, and even participatory practices conducted along with participatory values and intentions failed to substantially improve the situation. Yet, failure to solve a problem is not tantamount to one's failure to learn or to institutionalize (see the subsequent section, the second institutionalization pattern).

Cases in which no double-loop learning emerged deliver an important counterpoint to the argument, highlighting the importance of institutional ambiguity and actors' heterogeneity. In the discussion on the delegation of schools, opposing voices coming from the local community, trade unions, and certain councillors were systematically set aside by decision-makers, who proceeded in accordance with hierarchical and quasi-market logic. Their dominating position enabled them to either dismiss or ignore alternative approaches proposed by external actors. The homogeneity of perspectives among those in control over the process reinforced the conviction that the right way to handle disagreement had been chosen. The Mayor's conviction that people protest because they are excessively demanding or manipulated tallies with councillors' belief that the public do not understand internal governance processes and, therefore, should delegate decision to democratically elected representatives. The emphasis put by the legal advisor of the municipality on the necessity to exactly follow the rule of law makes experiments with participation redundant and reduces them to documenting the fact that public consultation has indeed taken place. Although different, these perspectives have

at least one important thing in common: they do not regard external actors as either capable or legitimate partners in the governance processes. In an interaction, these views reinforce each other and minimize chances for any critical inquiry and entering the double-loop learning process.

The barrier case represents a similar pattern. Here, the mutually reinforcing perspectives are those of public officials, and academic and non-academic experts involved in the process. They all agree on one thing: people need to be convinced that "what we are proposing is right" (regional agency representative, interview, March 2014). They all perceive participatory approaches to governance through the paternalistic lens of education. Within their community of practitioners there is no one who could challenge their view and propose an alternative framing, suggesting that there is some important, context-based and local knowledge to be gained from those opposing the investment. Despite their emotional engagement in the process, they were not able to think outside the hierarchical logics. Here, officials did not make an instrumental use of participatory tools, as it was the case in the dispute over the WWTP. They *believed* that the aim of the process was to educate people on the benefits of the solution and to gain acceptance for the project. Inability to reach this goal despite multiple attempts and modifications in the form of meetings exposed officials and experts to a great deal of stress. The latter is exemplified in an expression used in a conversation between a professor invited to a meeting and a representative of the regional agency: "it's time to retire (…) it is not worth trying to convince them, it will only make you sick." (academic expert, interview, November 2013). Homogenized and technocratic orientations regarding participation and governance modes directed all their efforts and resources towards single-loop learning and prevented the questioning of the goal they were trying to reach.

The above considerations focused on governance double-loop learning are summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 7 Critical reflection on governance and double-loop governance learning is more likely when public administration practitioners are exposed to conflicting interpretations of governance institutions (institutional ambiguity) within their own organization or, more broadly, within their own epistemic community.[10]

8.2.4 Practitioners' Responses to Disruptions in the Institutional Perspective

Observing decision-making processes in a collective setting draws attention to how institutional and political context influences practitioners' responses to disruption. Sociological accounts of institutions focus on non-codified, informal conventions and collective scripts that regulate human behaviour (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). This perspective enables capturing the cognitive significance of institutional structures and recognizing the fact that actors may reproduce institutional logic without any conscious scrutiny—a conclusion of central importance for the governance learning phenomenon. Through the analysis of public dispute resolution, the working of cognitive pillar of institutions could be identified. I have developed propositions supplementing the typology of responses to surprise (disruption), which indicate how institutions penetrate thinking and acting, and how they prevent practitioners from being surprised, induce them to perpetuate a given mode of governance despite the occurrence of disturbances, even when doing so is not "efficient" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Powell 1991). In this sense, an "institutionally sensitive" definition of surprise could read as follows[11]:

Definition Surprise is a cognitive state caused by a disruption of institutionalized patterns of thinking and behaviour deployed by an (public) organization to deal with a specific (social) problem.

Proposition 8 The experience of surprise is crucial for governance learning because it triggers reflection in action and on action.

Importantly, in cases under consideration, detached reflection and double-loop learning were not the result of a planned organizational effort. Rather they occurred thanks to the favouring configuration of specific structural and individual conditions, in particular the diversity of perspectives on goals and means of governance within public agency itself. It should be emphasized that this diversity is, in fact, a manifestation of

coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures. If legal regulations had not been amended, protesters' claims would not have been legitimate; if professional education of diverse kinds had not transmitted certain values and concepts of participatory approaches, officials willing to engage the public would have been hard to find, and it would have been even harder to find skilled mediators and facilitators. Last but not least, if examples of collaborative approaches had not been accessible to practitioners, it would have proven extremely challenging to enhance and justify experimentation.

The table below illustrates linking the perceptions of surprise with responses to surprise, as well as institutional and political influences. The latter refers to the existence of parties whose needs and perspectives, including value-based perspectives, are not well served by the dominant institutional arrangement. Here, parties are divided into two groups: (a) a group of external stakeholders of the decision-making process, who actively oppose the means and goals of governance performed by public administration representatives; and (b) a group of internal stakeholders who—albeit to a varying degree—share understanding of goals and means of governance (Table 8.2).

The table summarizes considerations on how practitioners' experiences are grounded in institutions, and how institutions are inhabited and enacted by individuals. These conclusions should be perceived through the lens of considerations on metagovernance and learning presented in Chap. 1. If good governance means the ability to reflect and rebalance diverse governance modes, it would require public agencies to institutionalize reflection and learning. What is described here on the basis of case studies was *an adaptive and unplanned process of learning* of a new, network-based governance mode. It took place through incremental changes in hierarchical and/or quasi-market-based logics of governance (single-loop) and then through the questioning of the last two.

Even if the new governance mode based on participation had been learnt by practitioners and institutionalized within public administration, it does not mean that public administration is ready to perform good governance. Ideally speaking, public agencies should be able to gain excellence in using all three logics of governing and be able to detect when a different logic is needed as a supplement, or when a diametrical change of the logic proves necessary. In this sense, the most important

Table 8.2 Implementation of newly introduced governance institutions. Practitioners' responses to disruption in the institutional perspective

Practitioners' exposition to conflicting interpretations of formally codified collaborative governance institutions within or outside an organization/epistemic community		Perceptions of disruption/surprise	Responses to disruption	Institutionalized pattern of thinking	Learning
Within	Outside				
No—practitioners homogenous in their professional orientations towards governance (domination of hierarchy and quasi-market orientation)	Yes—challengers relatively weak	Disruption not perceived as surprising	Articulating the logic behind the practice	Reproduced—self reinforcing mechanism	No learning
No—practitioners homogenous in their professional orientations towards governance (domination of hierarchy and quasi-market orientation)	Yes—challengers relatively powerful	Malfunction	Reconstituted absorbed copying	Reproduced—self reinforcing mechanism	Single-loop learning

No—practitioners homogenous in their professional orientations towards governance (domination of hierarchy and quasi-market orientation)	Yes—challengers powerful	Temporary breakdown	Deliberate copying	Strategically reproduced	Single-loop learning/ fake learning
No—practitioners homogenous in their professional orientations towards governance (domination of hierarchy and quasi-market orientation)	Yes—challengers powerful		Involved deliberation		
No—practitioners homogenous in their professional orientations towards governance (domination of hierarchy and quasi-market orientation)	Yes—challengers powerful		**Withdrawal**	Abandoned in the particular situation, continued elsewhere	
Yes—practitioners confronted with diverse professional orientations towards governance	Yes—challengers powerful	Total breakdown	Thematic intentionality	Questioned	Double-loop learning

challenge for public agencies is to find an answer to the following question: *how to institutionalize double-loop learning?*

8.3 Three Patterns of Governance Institutionalization

By highlighting the importance of (a) institutional ambiguity; (b) the agency of actors who, while enacting institutions, can maintain or transform them; and (c) drive the influencing actors' ability to challenge existent institutions, the previous section has set the stage for a description of how new governance mode is not only learned, but also institutionalized within public agencies.[12] As the analysis of empirical data suggests, institutionalization of new governance mode follows diverse patterns and results in hybrids containing original and new institutional arrangements in various proportions. As illustrated in Table 8.1 at the beginning of the chapter, three results are observed in cases under scrutiny. Within two of them (the case of schools and anti-flood facilities), a new governance mode was institutionalized as a top-down approach. Within another two (market location and WWTP), the institutionalization of coordination between bottom-up and top-down governing mode was advanced. In all cases, the institutionalization of horizontal coordination lagged behind. As a result of cross-case analysis, *three institutionalization patterns* can be distinguished. The *first* pattern is marked by the reinforcement of the original institutional logic into new patterns of rule and is marked by the absence of challengers who would question the dominant logic and initiate changes. The *second* pattern develops through interactions between actors representing the dominant logic and challengers occupying peripheral positions within the organization or the epistemic community (Zietsma and Lawrence 2010; Battilana et al. 2009). The *third* pattern evolves through the encounter of actors representing the dominant logic with challengers occupying a central position in the organization or the epistemic community.

In each of these three patterns, exogenous shock displaying within a larger field (political and legal changes described as the 'governance turn')

are translated into field-level changes through the interplay of public and non-public actors. In each of them ambiguity, agency, and power play an important role. Below, I describe these patterns and reflect on how learning is connected to, and yet decoupled from, the institutionalization process.

As already argued at the level of practice, the governance turn necessarily takes place within a governance void, a relative weakness or lack of institutional infrastructure enabling an effective implementation of new modes of governance. The new institutional logic—and a new set of institutions—need to be operationalized on the ground. New practices have to be introduced and, within these practices, new roles assigned to public officials, politicians, citizens, NGOs, and businesses. When the process starts, new institutions attached to the governance turn are ambiguous—they have a high degree of openness in interpretation and implementation. Because they are new, they disrupt routines and are enacted in a more reflexive, intentional way.

In the previous section, I argue that the degree and quality of reflection upon disruptions varies depending on how original institutions impact professional orientations, and on the constellation of different groups of actors: those reproducing and those challenging the *status quo*. Here, I shall extend this line of argumentation by indicating how these phenomena (original institutions and constellation of actors) continue to affect the process of institutionalization of the new governance mode, that is, the process within which network-based and participatory approaches become valued, formalized, and established within public administration. Specifically, I suggest that the reflexive and intentional way of acting in the process of interpreting and implementing new regulations means that actors on the ground perform *institutional work*, practice that is to intentionally affect institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006; Lawrence et al. 2009; Zietsma and Lawrence 2010). In this case, it is about affecting governance institutions enabling public administration to coordinate multi-stakeholder, multijurisdictional, and multilevel processes. The work of actors who intend to affect institutions may involve projective, future-oriented agency, as well as habitual agency, selecting among sets of established routines (DiMaggio 1988; Maguire et al. 2004;

Zietsma and Lawrence 2010). While the latter replicates existing patterns of thinking and acting, the first requires *institutional innovation* and *entrepreneurship* (DiMaggio 1988; Hargrave and Van de Ven 2006; Mair and Marti 2009).

For at least two decades, institution studies have focused on untangling the paradox of embedded agency: how those subject to institutions in a field can effect changes within them. Such a frame put the emphasis on the active creation of new practices. Here, I am interested in both: how those subject to institutions in the field can both effect changes and *resist* them. The balancing of these two angles brings me closer to approaches that put power struggles and institutional inertia at a prominent place in the analysis (Becker 1995; Hallet and Ventresca 2006; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). In this vein and in the course of empirical analysis, I have combined two types of institutional work: *practice work*, understood as developing and legitimizing practices, and *identity work*[13] understood as developing and legitimizing roles and identities (Svenningsson and Alvesson 2003; Zietsma and Lawrence 2010; Gawer and Phillips 2013) with habitual and projective agency. This analytical exercise enables capturing actions oriented to the creation of qualitatively new solutions (following a new logic) from actions oriented to proposing "the same but in a new wrapping" (following the original, old logic) (Table 8.3).

The governance turn exemplifies the logic shift in organizational fields of public administration agencies. These pressures generate tensions between the established and new practices and identities. In such instances, organization members couple environmental pressures for change with their daily practices (Binder 2007). Following Scott's insight

Table 8.3 Institutional work around logic shifts

	Habitual agency	Projective agency
Identity work	Developing and legitimizing new identities within the framework of the *old* logic	Striving to develop and legitimize new roles and identities within the framework of the *new* logic
Practice work	Developing and legitimizing new practices within the framework of the *old* logic	Striving to develop and legitimize new practices within the framework of the *new* logic

that *organizations are opportunistic collections of divergent interests* (Scott 1967, p. 23), we must bear in mind that practitioners might respond to environmental pressures differently, with disruptive and incremental changes to be introduced to existing practices, or with an active resistance to change. The latter might take the form of persistent reference to the established logics, reiterating its assumptions and legitimizing attempts to preserve the *status quo*. As demonstrated by the analysis of cases, these reactions represent a combination of strategic and self-activating responses.

A major feature of the *first institutionalization pattern* observed in the empirical data is the (re)enforcement of original institutional logic into new patterns of rule, and hence a process evolving through habitual agency. The case of schools and the case of the anti-flood facility are exemplifications thereof. Actors resorted to habitual agency, reaching to cognitive and behavioural scripts encoded in old institutions in order to make sense of new regulations. Importantly, in both cases their actions were *not* purely strategic in the sense that decision-makers did *not* fight to maintain original power arrangements and protect their own interests (at least this was not the driving force behind their actions). This remark makes the label 'habitual' even more accurate. Following the collaborative logic when designing and implementing solutions for the problem of schools and anti-flood facilities would not diminish resources at the disposal of dominating actors (the Mayor and 'her' administration in the case of schools and the Regional agency in the case of anti-flood facilities). The major obstacle in practising new rules was that its logic was contradictory to their belief system, in particular convictions about professional identities, and about the kind of relationship between professionals (public officials and experts) and the field in which they operate.

Importantly, officials and experts seemed oblivious to this contradiction, as they looked at the new rules through an old frame. The institutional work they performed was, in principle, an *intentional readjusting of new rules to fit old ways of thinking and acting*. The more visible the disagreement of challengers outside an organization would be, the more intentional the readjustment would become. The identities of parties involved in public disputes were reconstructed according to well-

established institutional logics: citizens and non-public organizations as those who listen and vote, or possibly deliver feedback on their level of satisfaction with services and products they have been provided with, and identities of public officials (especially those who have been elected) as solely responsible for the development of ideas and their implementation. Institutional work directed at developing and legitimizing new roles within an old logic reinforced and partially overlapped with the work directed at developing and legitimizing new practices: the Mayor could not imagine that citizens might contribute to the development of ideas. This is why she advanced the solution herself, and then argued for the need to vote over the proposed solution at Council meetings; and eventually, having a ready resolution accepted by the Council, she considered it ready for public consultation. The particular perception of the role played by citizens and officials also contributed to the creation of a bulletin that was to *educate* citizens on how public management processes work and why certain decisions, even if unpopular, need to be made.

A similar mechanism of mutual reinforcement of practice and identity work was observed in the case of barriers, where the perception of identities influenced practice work, for example, the manner in which meetings were organized and presented to people: rather as lectures than as spaces for an open exchange of information and discussion.

Institutional work performed by public officials precipitated responses from the field. In the case of schools, local protesters, as well as some insiders, for example, councillors lacked adequate social and organizational skills to perform institutional work effectively, or to challenge the dominant patterns of interpretation and implementation of a new governance mode. Attempts to challenge the dominant actor took place *within* the dominant frame, for example, councillors were trying to enter the discussion by questioning the legality of the proposed resolutions and not the logic of the operation itself. External actors who were not invited to take part in discussions did not have a chance to learn to participate and their passive attitude was further reinforced by the paternalistic attitudes of municipality authorities (for more a detailed description, see Chap. 4). As a result, the original, dominant pattern infiltrated new institutions, shaping mutual expectations and relationships. Over the following years,

collaborative ways of governance were practised and refined, becoming quasi-surveys.

In the case of the barrier (anti-flood system), the response from the field was far more active and focused on resistance. Yet again, although more active, it remained resistance within an imposed frame. The local community participated in the process presented to them as participatory and as seeking their opinion and agreement. Within this process, officials were educating the local community on the advantages of the barrier, while the inhabitants continued to oppose the barrier and demanded a different solution. Data from interviews with professionals and experts involved in the process allow to speculate that despite this failure, their way of thinking about the participatory governance process remained unchanged. If we stick to Selznick's definition of institutionalization, according to which "to institutionalize" means to "infuse the task with value" (Selznick 1957, p. 17), we are forced to assert that, in this particular field, participatory governance was not institutionalized at all, and that the very idea of governance and participation was degraded. None of the actors involved in the process could see any value in participation. As already mentioned, public officials perceive these approaches as exposing public management to the risk of demagogy, while local community sees them as a smoke screen enabling public agencies to pretend they care about citizens' needs and opinions.

Proposition 9 In the absence of internal actors displaying projective agency, the process of interactions between actors within and outside the organization reinforces the well-established (old) institutional logic in practices and identities proposed by a new governance mode.

The second pattern of institutionalizing a new governance mode develops *through interactions between actors representing the dominant logic and challengers occupying peripheral positions in the organization or epistemic community* (Zietsma and Lawrence 2010; Battilana et al. 2009). This pattern is best exemplified by the case of WWTP. The long-lasting conflict over the investment opened a space for alternatively oriented actors within

an organization and, more broadly, within an epistemic community. In their attempts to maintain control and regain legitimacy questioned by the protesters, top-level public officials commissioned the use of participatory practices. Empirical data indicate that this decision was based on an instrumental approach to these practices and that new, participatory practices were accompanied by old ways of thinking (see case description for details). In this case, however, political and symbolic governance learning—as an intentional activity aimed at controlling policy spaces, not at improving governance itself—produced unintended meso-level outcomes. Despite their initially ritual character, participatory modes of governance started to penetrate organizational spaces, because certain actors found them *right* and/or *beneficial*. These actors performed both identity and practice work by developing and legitimizing new practices and identities within a new, collaborative and participatory logic. In the case of WWTP, several actors advocated the adoption of a new logic. Here, I shall focus on the Social Communication Department, which over the course of the conflict grew from a small unit at the bottom of the city administration pyramid to become an important department reporting directly to the President and be responsible for public consultation throughout the city (for a description of other actors who built their position by 'riding the participatory wave', see a more detailed description in Chap. 6).

In 2008, when the conflict escalated, the symbolic importance of the Department was strengthened by the President, who elevated its position within the organizational hierarchy. Importantly, this symbolic gesture was not followed by any decisions about providing the Department with additional resources. Nevertheless, it proved to be enough to trigger an *institutionally entrepreneurial action*. The director, a former NGO employee, used his knowledge and embeddedness in the non-governmental sector to mobilize external resources. The Department developed a project of public consultations in the municipalities of the city and received financing from EEA Grants. Having secured the necessary resources, the director employed new professionals with a background and orientations similar to his. All of them had had experience in the field of conflict resolution and facilitation of public meetings.

Over the years, the Department, its director and employees were a driving force behind the development and experimentation with participation, as well as the institutionalizing participatory logic in organizational structures and procedures of the City Hall. It does not mean, however, that the Department changed the way of thinking about and practising public management throughout the city administration structure. Instead, they accustomed the administration to the new participatory logic of governance through building a narrative justifying the need for a new approach, while at the same time allowing other organization members *to keep some (or even most) of their original identity*. This is an example of such an 'inclusive' frame, reducing internal tensions between a hierarchically oriented organizational identity and new practices associated with the new logic:

> We need to combine the knowledge of experts representing different parties: those who use the city, those who manage it (officials), and experts in a given domain (for example architects). Each of them thinks she knows best, but they know different things. Officials have a vast knowledge of procedures, they know what is allowed, and happens elsewhere. The experts know what can be done from the technical point of view. Citizens know, because they use the city every day. We facilitate the coordination of these perspectives, we make them respect each other to see the complementarity of their knowledge. (interview, June 2013)

The strategy adopted here is based on avoiding any open confrontation and the direct questioning of original identities and practices. The staff of SCD do not push organization members to change, rather they try to exploit a void (governance void), that is, a space to which no one in the organization has any claims—on the contrary, it is a space that inspires feelings of uncertainty and fear.

SCD employees coupled this *inclusive* and *non-confrontational identity work* with similar *practice work*. This is how the director recalls the first attempts to implement public consultation practices within the city's municipalities:

> when we approached the mayors of municipalities with a ready project and the money to implement it (EEA Grants), the dialogue was different and much easier. Only one mayor was reluctant, he did not want any consultation, he told us it was a total waste of money. We were unable to convince him. Eventually, I told him: 'come on, if you don't agree, we won't be able to settle the project'; it was only then that he finally agreed. In the end, he liked it so much that at the moment, he is constantly looking around for consultation opportunities. These (consultation) processes really show you a different perspective. It triggered learning processes … (interview, June 2013)

The core features of a strategy employed by an institutional entrepreneur with a peripheral position are: avoiding confrontation by showing the space in which new practices can be implemented along with old practices, by increasing the amount of resources to be shared, hence creating a situation of 'a cheap try',[14] where all actors get a chance to experiment with the new logic, and learning in action, without risking too much. SCD employees skilfully built the Department's identity as complementary to more established identities. They built their image as those capable of reducing tensions internally, between the organizational identity and new practices associated with the new logic (Svenningsson and Alvesson 2003). The following quote is a good illustration of this tension:

> they [officials from different departments] come to us when they face a conflict, because they are afraid and do not know how to deal with it. We are an entity that stands out from the rest. Officials do not perceive us as part of the city administration, but rather as an extension of NGOs. To the outsiders, though, we are perceived as part of the administration. (SCD director, interview, July 2013)

SCD employees invested significant amounts of effort into building an institutional infrastructure within the governance void. They pushed for creating procedures, organizational positions and spaces designated for facilitating participatory processes. Thanks to their activities, district offices were equipped with a position formally responsible for organizing dialogue with the public. They established the Public Consultation

Platform, a register of all past (since 2008) and current consultation processes freely accessible to the public. Eventually, with their help and advice, the city President issued an act defining public consultation and making it compulsory to announce each consultation process held by the city administration authorities on the Public Consultation Platform.

An important condition for this successful institutional work was the position occupied by the SCD in relation to diverse actors involved in the process of institutionalization of the new governance mode. The position bridged multiple fields representing different logics (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Kostova et al. 2008). This position of 'in-betweenness' increased the resources at their disposal—they were able to combine the support of social movements and local organizations (Hargraves and Van De Ven 2006) with an internal (yet instrumental) support of top-level management. Both kinds of support build their legitimacy inside an organization, yet if only the latter existed, their agency would be significantly weaker. The last quote from the interview with the SCD director:

> There is no doubt that external financial resources leveraged change. You can write it explicitly: if it had not been for EEA Grants, we would have never accomplished so much in such a short time. Of course, political will is also necessary and there must be a leader who wants this kind of change. As for myself, I have drawn a lot of my strength from my background, from the NGO environment. It gave me a lot clout here within the administration, I felt supported in what I endeavoured. (interview, June 2013)

The ability to combine both: support from the outside and the support of top-level management seems to be crucial, especially when we compare SCD actions with those of another institutional entrepreneur attempting to affect institutions from a peripheral position. In the market location case, the Polish Sociological Association was such an institutional entrepreneur. Sociologists who implemented the participatory research project and conducted mediation between city officials on the one hand, and merchants and local community representatives on the other hand, were actors from outside city administration, yet closely connected to it through participation in the local epistemic community of academics and experts,

who occasionally cooperated with city administration officials when developing local policies, organizing conferences and public meetings. Within this community, they developed particularly close relationships with SCD employees. Some of the researchers participated in abovementioned public consultation projects financed by EEA Grants. Researchers' entrance into the conflict scene was preceded by the withdrawal of top-level management from the steering role. As described in a previous section (see Sect. 8.2), when not provided with a signal that experimenting is welcome, officials locked in the well-established logics. This observation is crucial since without the leading and supportive role of authorities, the new institution can easily slide into the path of *degradation*, as it was illustrated in the case of anti-flood facilities. When the mediation process ended, the majority of its participants[15] were disappointed and angry and they started to contest the new mode of governance. Merchants had already been sceptical towards participatory approaches after observing that all collective bodies established by the municipality Mayor had been ignored by the city administration. The fiasco of the mediation process only reinforced their scepticism; they started to perceive mediation as an attempt to deceive them. Confusion about the role of mediators and city administration emerged and undermined their trust towards the institution of mediation and dialogue itself. In the interview, a representative of merchants stated: "I have learnt that before you start a dialogue you need to check who is financing the initiative, and if I hear that the city is paying for it, you will not see me at the table anymore" (interview, July 2014).

To sum up, the crucial characteristic of the second institutionalization pattern is institutional work performed by institutional entrepreneurs occupying a *peripheral position* within the organization. With their peripheral position, they tend to avoid direct questioning of the original, well-established logics. Disturbance in the organizational environment seems to them as an opportunity to act upon their values and increase resources they have at their disposal. They begin to develop new practices and identities within the governance void—a space that is unfamiliar and strange for other members of the organization. They use the frame of the new participatory logic, which resonates with expectations from the outside, expressed during the public dispute. The ability to *mobilize the support of actors external to the organization*, functioning according to the

alternative, network-based logic provides them with tangible (money) and intangible resources (legitimacy). Hence, what makes their position special is not only peripheral, but also *boundary bridging location*. As a result they are able to fill the governance void with the institutional infrastructure (like formal and informal patterns of action, the creation of new roles and positions, and building narratives that legitimize them) *from the bottom upwards* and *from the borders towards the centre* of the organization.

Proposition 10 Institutional entrepreneurs occupying peripheral positions within an organization are more likely to succeed when developing and legitimizing practices and identities linked to a new governance mode if they are able to mobilize support from outside the organization, and use non-confrontational, inclusive strategies while negotiating the meaning of new identities and practices with organizational members.

The third institutionalization pattern evolves through *the encounter of actors representing the dominant logic with challengers occupying a central position within the organization or epistemic community*. This pattern was observed in the market location case, where a newly appointed Vice President "switched the cognitive gear" (Louis and Sutton 1991) from hierarchical to collaborative, and actively engaged in collaborative attempts to solve the dispute. His actions have already been described before (see Sect. 8.2 and Chap. 5); here, the analysis shall focus on the qualities of his interactions with other organizational actors and on the manner in which he negotiated the meaning of practices and identities within participatory approaches to public management.

As I argue in the case description, the new Vice President entered into a space that was already prepared for the adoption of the new logic. As a response to the conflict, authorities had resorted to participatory rhetoric in order to regain legitimacy. The previous Vice President went as far as having recourse to the use of 'we have learnt, mantra (Hood 2000), when he declared in the local newspaper that authorities were in the process of 'learning' to organize dialogue (local newspaper interview, September 2009). Although the use of participatory approaches was instrumental

and learning 'fake', a space for change opened up, as the hierarchical logic was officially questioned, and because it became obvious that old ways of thinking and acting fail in solving the problem. In other words, the governance void revealed itself and waited for someone to fill it.

Contrary to institutional entrepreneurs occupying a peripheral position within the organization, an institutional entrepreneur holding a central position can afford to adopt a *confrontational strategy* when performing institutional work. Having a formal position of power, the new Vice President was able to design new practices and make his subordinates follow them, even if it meant going against procedural and habitual methods. He initiated new *collaborative practices* and convinced organizational members across departments and levels of public administration to adopt them. Within these processes, the *role* of the members of administration was to discuss different solutions with the community and merchants' representatives, and to provide them, as well as decision-makers, with information about any procedural and material aspects of the process. One of the merchants recalls:

> he was always there during meetings. We did not need any mediators anymore. We spoke directly to the Vice President. He was even able to call for someone if some additional information was needed, and the person would come and report to all of us directly, e.g. about what had been done about a certain issue. (interview, April 2013)

Importantly, the employees who tried to work according to the new collaborative logic, received substantial support and could further learn and improve their practice. In this particular case, these were street-level bureaucrats, directly responsible for managing the market area, who were in a touch with the merchants on a daily basis.

Apart from collaborative practices involving external stakeholders, new practices introduced by the new Vice President were linked to *multilevel and multijurisdictional coordination practices* taking place within public administration (see Sect. 8.2.2 on governance void). In terms of institutionalization, it is important to emphasize that despite significant amounts of institutional work that the Vice President put into bridging silos structures, this kind of coordination remained hand-controlled and

was pushed forward by an individual. No formal structures were in place to coordinate processes horizontally, around problems, instead of vertically, that is, around tasks (Ansell 2011). In order to put this coordination in place, the Vice President used his position of power either by ordering coordination directly, or by having a powerful ally—the city President—to convince a reluctant employee (see Sect. 8.2.2—the 'phone call to the President' scenario mentioned in an interview).

Along with introducing new practices, the new Vice President performed institutional work by *building narratives* justifying the new ways of acting, as well as the new roles adopted by the actors involved. The most prominent example is the 'there-is-no-alternative' narrative he provides when talking about *replacing* the hierarchical approach to public management with a participatory approach. First, he claims that such replacement is a fact and, second, that it is a historical necessity, a sign that a public management structure is becoming "civilized" (an original expression used by the Vice President). When describing the hierarchical approach, he directly questions the assumption of representative democracy in which citizens delegate power to politicians, who then solve public problems through public administration. He frames this approach as obsolete and old-fashioned, even shameful.

> In 2006, you would hear such opinion everywhere. They would argue in favour of the iron rule of representative democracy and ask: if we should have direct participation and consultation, what are the councillors for? I hear such voices now, but no one dares say it out loud.

The major line of his argumentation is very different from the one used by the director of the Social Communication Department. Both of them believed in participatory approaches and promoted them, but the SCD director used to work with a more inclusive, conciliatory strategy. The Vice President could afford to be confrontational because of his formal position of power.

Yet, it was not only the structural condition of power that made the Vice President's experiments with new practices so effective. He was equipped with *social skills*, above all the ability to conduct a respectful conversation and discuss conflicting interests and values in an open man-

ner. During an interview, one of the merchants related the moment when the new Vice President replaced the old one; he began by saying:

> It is a different kind of person. You can actually talk to him. (…) the previous Vice President was talking with us and, at the same time, looking at the documents, consulting something with his officials and checking his phone. (interview, April 2013)

These individual conditions (social skills), the ability to talk to people and make alliances, were a significant supplement to the structural condition (formal position of power). An employee of the city administration mentioned that the Vice President liked to say that he worked like a plumber.

> It is because when he cannot come to an agreement with one person (usually a department director), and hence 'the pipe of the decision making-process gets clogged', he tries to work out a solution by bypassing the person and, thus, restores the flow. (SCD employee, interview, February 2016)

Good *social skills* is what makes both institutional entrepreneurs—the new Vice President and the CSC director—very similar. Again, juxtaposing them with other highly skilful institutional entrepreneurs, that is, PSA researchers and mediators, indicates that this feature does not suffice to trigger the process of institutional change, or even the process of learning within a (public) organization. The *support of top-level organizational leaders* remains necessary.

In terms of the institutionalization of the new governance mode within city administration structures, the results are mixed. On the one hand, the Vice President successfully solved the problem and he accomplished it using the practices and logic of the new governance mode. When focusing on the inclusion of external stakeholders, one can say that the institutionalization process proved a success. Nevertheless, issues of multijurisdictional and multilevel coordination lagged behind. As the Vice President himself admits, heads of departments are still neither

expected to reach out to different departments and levels of organizational structures, nor held accountable for coordination. In this sense, breaking the silos structure emerges as a greater challenge than, for instance, the inclusion of an external stakeholder into governance processes.

This imbalance in the degree of institutionalization of two governance-related areas can be explained through reference to three issues. First of all, in the area of organizing dialogue and participation, top-down institutionalization efforts of the Vice President *complemented* bottom-up efforts of the SCD, and these two processes mutually increased their impact. Second, this area was *an explicit subject of pressures from outside* the organization, and both institutional entrepreneurs could relate to these pressures and draw legitimacy from them. Such external pressures were lacking in the case of multilevel and multijurisdictional coordination. And third, the area of dialogue and participation benefited from the institutional work performed by the SCD, directed at *building infrastructure* (procedures, positions) for inclusion, while institutional work performed by the Vice President focused on organizing ad hoc solutions. Practices proposed within these ad hoc solutions followed the new institutional logic and questioned the old one. They could have proven inspirational, but failed to provide clear rules that would govern future action. In other words, the new Vice President's actions were, to a large extent, less sustainable. If he had been replaced with someone representing a different outlook and having lower social skills, practices coordinating multijurisdictional and multilevel collaborations might have been abandoned. Paradoxically, despite the fact that the Vice President's strategy was far more successful when a particular problem needed to be solved, it is the SCD strategy that seems more effective when it comes to the institutionalization of governance.

Proposition 11 Institutional entrepreneurs' success in pushing forward institutional change towards a new governance mode is more probable if they combine social skills with attempts directed at building formal structures enabling governance.

Proposition 12 The institutionalization of governance is most likely to succeed when bottom-up and top-down institutional processes are linked to each other and coupled with external institutional pressures.

Proposition 13 The institutionalization of governance is most likely to succeed if institutional work performed by an institutional entrepreneur contains critical elements, that is, directed at confrontation and questioning the dominating logic, as well as constructive, that is, focused on building formal and informal patterns of acting.

The following figure illustrates the three patterns of institutionalization. Each of them is triggered as a response to disruption in public management processes and the 'discovery' of the governance void—the absence or weakness of the institutional infrastructure enabling the practice of participatory and collaborative governance approaches. Even though the rules on public access to information and participation are formalized, these institutions are new and open with regard to interpretation and implementation, that is, they are marked by a degree of ambiguity. Whether new approaches to governance will be institutionalized along with the new logic depends on the presence of institutional entrepreneurs who engage in institutional work, developing and legitimizing new practices and identities within the framework of new logic. In the absence of such an innovator, frameworks typical for the old logic permeate new practices and identities imposed by formal rules (i.e. national legislation). Within this process, old ways of thinking and acting are reinforced—the new governance mode which, according to the idealized form, follows network-based, collaborative and participatory approaches, is institutionalized according to the old, well-established top-down hierarchical or quasi-market logic.

If the institutionalization of the new governance mode is infiltrated with a strong opposition from actors outside the public organization whose interests and orientations are not well served by the emerging institutional arrangement, a probable institutional result is a compromise and degradation of collaborative and participatory approaches to gover-

nance. Here, compromise means that none of the actors involved in the process believes these kinds of approaches to be useful or valuable. If the first institutionalization pattern is accompanied with a moderate or weak opposition from the outside, the definition of participation and collaboration designed according to the well-established (hierarchical or quasi-market) logic is accepted and further reinforced in interactions in the local public sphere. In both cases the institutionalization does not happen on its own as a result of institutional inertia. It is enacted by social actors, who actively create meaning and interpret new regulations in the process of social interactions (Fig. 8.2).

The presence of institutional entrepreneurs within an organization[16] challenges the *status quo*, it introduces an alternative interpretation of practices and identities. The entrepreneur (intrapreneur) initiates changes and actively participates in the implementation. Depending on the position (central, peripheral), she may: (a) adopt more or less confrontational strategies of institutional work; (b) draw on external rather than internal support for material and non-material resources. Independently from the position within an organization, the effectiveness of intrapreneurs depends on their social skills and support from the top-level management. Social skills enable her to effectively communicate and build coalitions. Support from top-level management provides her actions with legitimacy towards other employees of the organization. As a result, the process of institutionalization advances *from the bottom upwards*, and *from the borders to the centre* of the organization (intrapreneur in a peripheral location), and from the top to downwards (intrapreneur in a central position). Regardless of their peripheral or central location, actions of intrapreneurs are facilitated by outside pressures that intensify the sense of urgency and relevance to experiments undertaken by institutional entrepreneurs.

In cases under empirical analysis, the latter two institutionalization patterns were complementary and mutually reinforcing. The area of multilevel and multijurisdictional coordination, where this complementarity was relatively less visible, is also the area where the governance void remains.

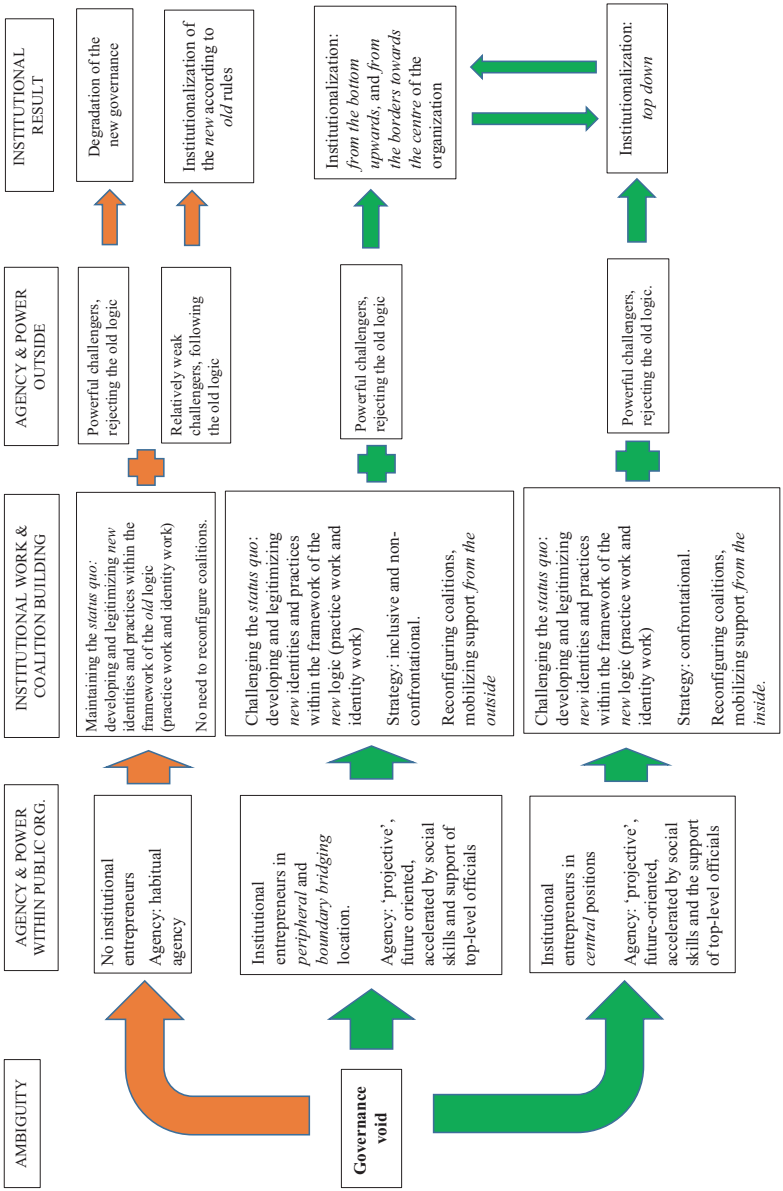

Fig. 8.2 Three patterns of governance institutionalization

8.3.1 Institutionalization and Learning as Different, yet Coupled Processes

Case studies documenting processes evolving over time and focusing on diverse actors and their interactions demonstrate that the process of institutionalization is different and, to a certain extent, separate from the process of learning. I propose to regard learning as an intentional activity undertaken at the individual level, transformed to the meso level of institutional structures through social interactions and the development of shared understanding and practices. Negotiation and power struggle permeate this transition; consequently, the meso-level effect rarely reflects the intentions of any particular individual or interest group in an adequate manner (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). In some of the cases under consideration, officials learnt to use participatory tools for strategic reasons. Nevertheless, even such 'fake' learning resulted in institutional changes, initially unintended by the subjects of learning. I argue that motivation for learning (e.g. regaining legitimacy) is secondary. It holds particularly true for double-loop learning, whose core characteristic is the ability to question the appropriateness of originally adopted beliefs and practices. Once the established practice and its taken-for-grantedness has been questioned, you cannot "unthink it". The questioning of the hierarchical or managerial logic that has been taken for granted, or even a superficial introduction of the participatory logic creates a powerful precedent, forms the basis for building new institutions, opens up space for negotiation among all actors involved in the process.

8.4 Conclusions

Patterns of institutionalization delineated above form part of a larger framework developed here within the frame of 'practice-based theory of governance learning and institutionalization'. Practitioners maintaining and challenging the status quo as well as engaging institutional ambiguities are, to a certain extent, 'products' of larger institutional environments and, specifically, institutional pressures (see Sect. 4.2). If diverse 'products'

of these pressures are present at a certain point defined by space and time, a critical reflection upon action (see Sect. 8.2) as well as the process of double-loop governance learning are more likely. Actors learning new approaches to governance engage in interactions influenced by local and extra local institutions and by power struggles. In the process of interactions, individual attempts to learn are transformed into a meso-level phenomenon, as shared understandings and practices are negotiated and developed through social interaction. New patterns of thinking and acting emerge and gradually accumulate in an organization as a generally accepted option. In other words, new patterns of governing become institutionalized.

The three sections above provide a comprehensive theoretical framework linking structural and constructivist moments of governance practice, explaining how structures are changed or maintained by consciously acting individuals (Rhodes 2012). It might be wrong or inadequate in many ways, but it delivers an epistemologically and practically useful method in which to investigate the phenomenon of learning in the public sector, as it focuses on core questions: Why and how does learning unfold? How does governance practice develop, as opposed to the ideal model? Eventually, it provides information on 'critical junctures' and configurations of influences making a difference in terms of how governance is learnt and institutionalized. This knowledge can provide us (academics and practitioners) with skills that allow turning spontaneous and accidental practices based on critical reflection and experimentation into a *planned effort to institutionalize learning*, above all learning in its explorative, double-loop form. Such institutionalization is necessary in order to ensure good governance, since governance learning is not about transition from traditional approaches, to public administration, to market-based approaches, for example, New Public Management and, eventually, to collaborative and participatory approaches such as New Public Governance. It is about learning how to use and improve each mode and how to switch between these options and balance them in response to problems that constantly evolve and reappear.

As the cases show, the diversity of actors' orientations is crucial for triggering both learning processes and institutionalization processes. On the individual level, confrontation with the alternative logics of thinking and

acting potentially triggers critical reflection and double-loop learning. Yet, in order to trigger institutional work directed at developing and legitimizing new practices and identities linked to the new logic, this diversity needs to be present *within* an organization (or at least within the community of practitioners).

Cases in which double-loop learning and institutionalization of the new governance mode took place deliver an illustration of how public organizations are able to accommodate contradictory institutional logics coupled with different governance modes. The diversity of institutional arrangements within an organization builds up in time in response to shifts within a wider institutional context. In literature, these shifts are referred to as changes in paradigms of public administration: from Weberian bureaucracy, institutional logic dominated by hierarchy, to quasi-market approaches, such as New Public Management, institutional logic seeking market-based solutions and, most recently, the 'governance turn' manifest in praising such concepts as New Public Governance, guided by institutional logic that refers to networks (Barzley 1992; Osborne and Gaebler 1992; Lynn 2001; Ansell 2011). The process in which shifts in the institutional context alter the interpretation of organizational structures represents sedimentation rather than replacement (Cooper et al. 1996; Seo and Creed 2002). Subsequent layers of institutional logic add up, and each of them produces its own structures and ideologies that provide resources for competing interests and values in institutionalization processes (reproduction and reconstruction).

Public administration deals with problems characterized by different degrees of complexity, and therefore needs to use different governance modes and institutional logics to respond to them (see Chap. 2). This is why all three modes of governance are needed and institutional contradictions mentioned above can be productive and create an opportunity for—and not a threat to—good governance. Internal inconsistencies that are the result of spontaneous, evolutionary process of adaptation to external pressures should be cultivated and *institutionalized*. In this sense, a linear narrative suggesting evolution from bureaucracy through markets to networks ought to be abandoned. Keeping the minimum level of variety (Jessop 2011) or, in other words, *a minimum level of inconsistency*, is what enables metagovernance—improving a specific governance mode and recompos-

ing proportions of governance modes used in a given policy field. Having the diversity of governance modes institutionalized within public organization enables leaders to choose which governance mode needs to be activated, or decide when to engage in a collective, critical, and creative inquiry about handling a given problem. Embedding opportunities for such a collective critical reflection into organizational structures would be conducive to gaining excellence in practising a given governance mode, as well as mastering the art of switching between the modes and experimenting with new solutions. Within these kinds of structures, single-loop learning and double-loop learning are institutionalized, and public administration officials are turned into reflexive practitioners.

Along with *institutionalizing the diversity of governance modes*, the *institutionalization of multilevel coordination* is necessary. Top-level hierarchy leaders should take decisions regarding governance modes through close engagement in concrete problem-solving dilemmas of street-level bureaucrats. Within this model, top executives are freed from thorough operational control and can engage in strategic planning and provide the organization with a clear policy direction. They form a constitutional level focused on the overall policy direction and defining the goals of the organization (Ansell 2011, p. 119; Sabel 1999). Importantly, within this kind of hierarchy (called pragmatist hierarchy, Ansell 2011, p. 119), organizational levels are loosely connected and semiautonomous. Autonomy allows officials to engage in problem-solving, while the coupling of different levels prevents planning from being confined to a lofty and isolated position.

Ruminations on metagovernance and learning have consequences for the discussion on leadership in public organizations. Denis et al. (2009) argue that in order to enrich our thinking about leadership in public administration, we need to recognize the pluralistic nature of the organizational context within which leaders of public sector organizations operate, as well as the dynamic and collective nature of leadership processes in these settings. The analysis presented above strongly supports this conclusion and puts it forward by indicating how this plurality should be *strategically* used in order to enhance critical reflection and pursue governance learning. Among others, it calls for the reconceptualization of institutional leadership (Selznick 1957), which has thus far focused on managing the

internal consistency of an organization (commitment to the values and mission of the organization), and hence has been perceived as leadership based on a backward-leaning vision, which means that the vision is there to remind the organization of its core values (Washington et al. 2008). Institutional leadership is perceived by Selznick as a process in which values are promoted and protected. An institutional leader is a major actor of institutionalization process within which organizations are infused "with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (1957, p. 17). He suggests that the process of institutionalization takes place as leaders respond to internal and external forces that exert pressure on organizations. Yet the existence of multiple governance logics, and hence multiple values represented by each mode split the institutionalization process, as in the process of governance, the number of values that need promotion and protection multiplies.

As illustrated in the analysed cases, the value of social justice and democracy pursued by public administration can be understood differently depending on the governance mode and institutional logic that accompany it. For instance, within the hierarchical logic, public agencies are the final link in a chain of democratic representation that begins with the electorate, moves on to the legislature, then to appointed agency officials, and finally reaches street-level bureaucrats. Network-based logic proposes building up societal and democratic consent through collaborative problem-solving (Ansell 2011, pp. 17–18). Market-based logic would build consent around the quality and costs of public services. Considerations on metagovernance presented here and in the Chap. 2 of this book suggest that the concept of institutional leadership within public administration should be extended to include *reflexivity*, the leaders' ability to work with different governance modes (or ways of organizing, Alvesson et al. 2017), critical assessment of the act of problem-solving and, when necessary, the ability to switch between the logics of governance and interpretations of values and to blend them depending on the situation. As the empirical analysis indicates and theoretical insights suggest, reflexivity is practised above all collectively and remains closely connected to acting upon the problem. In decision-making settings characterized by high uncertainty and a lack of consensus on values, institutional leadership requires balancing

the backward-leaning position (Washington et al. 2008), promoting and protecting values such as social justice and democracy, with a forward-leaning vision of an institutional entrepreneur, focused on changing practices within public organizations.

Notes

1. Theoretically speaking, governance void could refer to each of the governance modes (through hierarchies, markets, or networks).
2. In the paper on governance learning Robert Rządca and I use the term "astonishment" in order to emphasize the distinctive character of the collective context (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). Describing the surprise through the lens of the collective context reveals a new (additional) meaning of this term. However, as I currently see it, it does not describe a substantially different phenomenon. Hereby, I thank Dvora Yanow for very useful remarks on the collective context of surprize.
3. Since the structures are all the time enacted, there still is room for change and negotiation and in this sense there is no 'final' structure. The expression is used here to refer to certain points in time, where collaborative and participatory practices became relatively well known and frequently adopted (and empirical research was finished).
4. District mayor continued establishing social advisory bodies at different stages of the process, despite the fact that he did not have any decision-making power. As a result, ideas like dialogue and participation become contested among local community and merchants (see Sect. 3.2).
5. A quote already used in the case study description (see Sect. 3.2).
6. Barriers protect large areas of land located behind them. However, in case of a flood water levels rise quicker in front of barriers. If only one barrier is built, the inhabitants of this particular village are exposed to risk in case of a flood, as they are not protected by another barrier.
7. These concerns were not unfounded, as proven by the court sentence issued in late 2017, pursuant to which the Regional Agency of a neighbouring region and a national agency responsible for dredging were found guilty of neglecting several types of works. The case was brought to the court by a local community.
8. His department co-funded the PSA project.

9. Fliegstein and McAdam define social skills as a complex mix of cognitive, affective, and linguistic facilities that render individuals more or less effective as skilled strategic actors supremely well adapted to the demands of collective action (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, p. 47). All these facilities rest on our ability to "take the role of the other".
10. Since epistemic communities by definitions are highly homogenous the expression might be replaced by epistemic networks (Rommetveit et al. 2018).
11. In the paper on governance learning Robert Rządca and we use the term "astonishment" in order to emphasize the distinctive character of the collective context (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016). Describing the surprise through the lens of the collective context reveals a new (additional) meaning of this term. However, as I currently see it, it does not describe a substantially different phenomenon. Hereby, I thank Dvora Yanow for very useful remarks on the collective context of surprise.
12. Distinguishing ambiguity, agency and power as significant actors draws on Mahoney and Thelen's framework of gradual institutional change introduced in the book titled "Explaining institutional change. Ambiguity, Agency, Power" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). Importantly the framework relates to endogenous institutional change; here it proved to be useful in explaining changes triggered by exogenous shocks (legal change).
13. I use the term "identity work" (Svenningsson and Alvesson 2003; Gawer and Phillips 2013), not "boundary work" (Zietsma and Lawrence 2010), as it better reflects the dilemmas faced by the practitioners whom I have observed. They were concerned with the question about their roles and responsibilities as public officers, rather than understanding what differentiates them from other groups taking part in the process. These are two sides of the same coin, since boundaries are understood as the differences between people and groups (Zietsma and Lawrence 2010).
14. A label proposed by Robert Rządca.
15. The exceptions were street-level bureaucrats engaged in direct interactions with merchants on a daily basis. They explicitly mention that mediation enabled them to "step back, observe the process from the distance and see things they have not noticed previously" (interview, September 2013).
16. The word institutional 'intrapreneur' might be more adequate.

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9

Making Social Sciences Matter for Public Administration and Public Policy

So, you represent the academia. That is great! You might be of help for us, because we have a real problem here.
Municipality Mayor, interview, case 4 (anti flood facility), March 2013

Bridging the gap between theory and practice is a core challenge for public management and governance scholars (Rhodes 2012; Jessop 2011; Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011; Forester 2017). In the academia, the discussion about the relevance of social research for practice naturally gravitates towards ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In the light of growing concerns that management theories are not relevant for practice, Sandber and Tsoukas ask:

> Could it be that the onto-epistemological assumptions we make about the phenomena we investigate "artificialize" (Bruner, 1990: xiii) our objects of study, "strip out most of what matters" (Weick, 2007: 18), and lead to sterile research outcomes, typically in the form of "mainstream journal articles [that] are written as if they apply to some disembodied abstracted realm" (Zald, 1996: 256; see also Starbuck 2006)? (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011, p. 339)

M. Strumińska-Kutra, *Democratizing Public Management*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74591-6_9

In a similar vein, Rhodes argues that modernist-empiricist approaches based on top-down narratives of state regulation and control, or on aggregated models illustrating the shift from government to governance should be replaced with interpretive approaches. The latter are more valid because they put people, their practices, and perspectives back into governance, and hence help to understand how governance "arises from the bottom up as conflicting beliefs, competing traditions, and varied dilemmas cause diverse practices" (Rhodes 2012, p. 48). When discussing the relationship between social research, governance, and policy, proponents of interpretive approaches question the generalizability of research results from one context to the other. Also, they emphasize that policy analysis would benefit from recognizing the fact that problems to be solved and crises to be managed are not objective and shared, but rather socially and discursively constructed (Yanow 2009; Jessop 2011; Gustavsen and Pålshaugen 2015). A modernist tendency to focus on goal attainment instead of asking who defines problems and sets goals results in neglecting problems generated through asymmetric power relations and domination (Mayntz 2001; Jessop 2011; Denzin 2011; Torrance 2011). At the background of this discussion, there are questions central for the philosophy of science: does reality exist independently from human cognition? Are facts separable from values?

I am not suggesting that this discussion is unimportant for bridging the gap between theory and practice. On the contrary, I am convinced that a discussion on paradigms is relevant and necessary, especially in the context of politics and policy making (Denzin 2011; Torrance 2011). It sheds light on how power relationships and ideologies potentially influence the way policy problems are conceptualized and solved—a question that is of central importance for democracy. In this sense, such discussion supports reflection about the goals and means of governance processes, and hence reflection about their effectiveness and inclusiveness. Within this book I have taken a stance in the debate when I have argued it is necessary to inquire into governance processes from an interpretive and critical perspective.

Nevertheless, this meta-theoretical debate is dominated by academics, their language and their perceptions. One can have doubts whether and how this dispute percolates into the practice of politics and policy mak-

ing and, in particular, whether it influences the way practitioners perceive and use scientific research when enacting public management and experimenting with different governance modes.

This is why I suggest reframing the discussion and focusing on the following practice-driven question: *How could science matter for practitioners in public administration, policy and politics?* Within such alternative framing, the practitioner becomes the focus of considerations, while onto-epistemological issues take the back seat as secondary and subordinated to practitioners' perceptions of utility. Just as in the quote opening this chapter, the practitioner asks the academic: how can you help me? Or even more directly: what do I get in exchange for helping you with your research? Below I present three types of research that can be useful for a practitioner trying to learn and improve governance processes: model-driven research, research based on interpretive approach (extrapolation-based research in particular) and collaborative research (with a special focus on action research). Each of them offers a different answer to the question about bridging the theory-practice gap.

In the last section, I argue that the discussion about the relationship between theory and practice could benefit from considerations developed within Science Technology Society studies (STS studies). Analysis of the relationships between science, politics, and policy making is the major concern of this discipline. Frameworks developed in STS studies, such as linear and stakeholder models of science, facilitate reflecting and theorizing about diverse possible configurations in relationships between academics and practitioners. In this chapter, I am focusing solely on the utility of social research for public management and governance practitioners. Nevertheless, wider reflection on these issues is necessary as, on the one hand, science-based knowledge is the key to managing today's societal challenges and, on the other hand, social trust in science appears to be decreasing. It has become clear that science cannot straightforwardly predict and control risk (Beck 1992) and expert knowledge is often used for rationalization and persuasion in politics and policy making (Rayner and Malone 1998; Pielke 2007). Saltelli et al. (2016) speak of a "generalized crisis in the epistemic governance of science" (p. 14), mentioning such issues as the ineffective use of scientific evidence for policy, or the industrialisation and commodification of science. In this sense the ques-

tion about using science in politics and policy making becomes critical for the sustainability of the scientific enterprise. Considerations aimed at diversifying and describing different roles of academics in politics and policy making, depending on the circumstances (e.g. uncertainty, consensus over values see Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993; Pielke 2007; Ansell and Geyer 2016) present an important way forward.

9.1 Three Types of Research Relevant for Public Management Practitioners

The first way a practitioner can make sense of academic research in order to advance her ability to learn and perform good governance is through *model-driven research.* Model-driven research develops *rule-based knowledge* on public management and governance practices. Within the model, significant variables are extracted from a specific context in order to establish a set of factors responsible for a given result (e.g. success or failure of management processes). Classic Elinor Ostrom studies on managing commons in Africa and Nepal (Ostrom 1990) or Robert Putnam's inquiry about the functioning of local government in Italy (Putnam et al. 1993) are examples of such research. When policy-makers and public officials are familiar with the model that contains a set of factors responsible for the success of self-organized governance systems or effective functioning of the local government, they gain ideas about organizing similar systems within the social, organizational, and institutional context of their own practice. Importantly, although deprived of contextual information, these models are grounded in the observation of practice, and are hence supposed to be relevant for the advancement of governance practices within public spaces. Practice grounding, as well as the willingness to challenge social and economic theories via conclusions drawn from the observation of practice, is an important part of the model-driven research endeavour. Even a brief look at the titles of books co-authored and edited by Elinor Ostrom clearly testifies to this intention, see for example, *Working Together: Collective Action, the Commons, and Multiple Methods in Practice* (Poteete et al. 2010) or

Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice (Hess and Ostrom 2007).

The second type of research that can be useful for practitioners is interpretive research design delivering *context-based knowledge*, which is not concerned with the significance of abstract variables, but is only concerned with context-sensitive descriptions of how practitioners experience reality. This kind of research reflects the complexity of decision-making processes evolving within the public policy and public management practice, and is therefore well-equipped to incentivize reflexive, critical attitudes towards action and learning processes. As Dvora Yanow puts it, modernist, model-driven approaches are 'the right answer' approaches, suggesting that the implementation of a given set of principles will trigger a specific result. The modernist model originates from the assumption that the perception of the problem is accurate, whereas the interpretive perspective is an 'inquiry' approach, which problematizes the very definition of the problem, for example, through illustrating the significance of framing (Yanow 1996, 2009, see also Schon and Rein 1994; Forester 2018).

Directly referring to the issues of research practical utility, some researchers point out that an objective analysis of a problem out of the context may not meet practitioners' needs. At least not as much as learning about specific experiences, perspectives and contexts of action (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011); some of them argue that managers learn mainly through storytelling (Hummel 1990, 1991). A detailed description of practices embedded in a specific organizational and institutional environment facilitates understanding governance processes, as it tells a story of what happens when you try to implement change into public management strategies. The story illustrates how the practitioner is immersed in a rich and complex context, which may limit her possibilities of action, but also creates opportunities. An investigator who presents a case in a detailed and naturalistic manner provides readers with a vicarious experience. When faced with a fine case study, readers have the impression of a first-hand observation of the events described, they can make generalizations when encountering a similar case and, subsequently, confirm or modify any conclusions drawn from it. Stake and Trumbull (1982) term this process "naturalistic generalization", while Lincoln and

Guba (1985) relinquish any generalization and suggest replacing it with "transferability" and "fittingness" (Strumińska-Kutra and Koładkiewicz 2018). Practitioners need to judge and/or practically verify whether a hypothesis developed in one context 'fits' or can be transferred into another. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 238) describes the research construction enhancing the possibility of this type of generalization as follows:

> I avoid linking the case with the theories of any one academic specialization. Instead I relate the case to broader philosophical positions that cut across specializations. In this way I try to leave scope for readers of different backgrounds to make different interpretations and draw diverse conclusions regarding the question of what the case is a case of. (…) The goal is to allow the study to be different things to different people. I try to achieve this by describing the case with so many facets – like life itself – that different readers may be attracted, or repelled, by different things in the case.

Michael Barzley (2007) suggests that case-based research can use extrapolation-based design in order to facilitate practitioners' attempts to introduce research-based knowledge into practice. This design focuses on investigating practices in source sites and prepares the ground for a disciplined and ingenious (context-sensitive) extrapolation of practices from source to target sites, for example, by delivering a framework highlighting the phenomena, processes and relationships crucial for the development of a given practice. While getting to know someone else's successes and mistakes, practitioner learns from them (second-hand learning, Barzley 2007). Research presented in this book was inspired by this approach; this is why it begins with a recount of contextualized stories of governance learning and institutional change, in order to facilitate the *understanding*[1] of a phenomenon in all its complexity. It is followed by a cross-cutting analysis of phenomena and patterns significant for the failure and/or success of governance processes. The demonstration of the spontaneous processes of single-and double-loop learning provides a background for performing an effective institutional design, mimicking naturally occurring processes, yet 'superficially' accelerating their functioning. Here, this design would include building an institutional and organizational infrastructure enabling single-loop learning, that is,

advancing a particular governance mode, and double-loop learning, that is, advancing the ability to question a given mode and switch or balance between modes.

Representatives of the interpretive tradition and "practice turn" (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011) in research on management and in organizational studies claim that they bridge the theory-practice gap, because they make theory a derivate of practice and, by doing so, they make theory more reflective of the "richness" of practice (Weick 2003, p. 14, Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011). Therefore, their theories resonate better with practitioners' experience than model-driven research producing rule-based knowledge. Even if it is so, both types of research, that is, model-driven, producing rule-based knowledge and interpretive, and extrapolation-driven, producing context-based knowledge, can only be relevant for practitioners if results are communicated in the right way. In both cases, making research on public administration and public management a matter for practitioners would mean improving its accessibility to practitioners in terms of language and in terms of methods and channels of communication (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2012; Alvesson et al. 2009). This requires institutional support and change within the current systems of science and research management, including career incentives. Despite long-lived criticism, research impact is measured rather by citations than by activities that would indicate relevance to practice.

Within both types of research—model-driven and interpretive, extrapolation-based—knowledge production and knowledge implementation are separated from each other. Practitioners have no impact on what is researched and how it is done. They are the end-users of scientific research; it is up to them to translate knowledge into practice. A different approach to the matter is proposed in the third type of inquiry useful for advancing learning and good governance capabilities. In *the collaborative form of research* practitioners no longer 'wait in a line' for scientific results to be transformed into applied research and implemented, or translated into the 'lay language'. They become involved in a collaborative inquiry generating both scientific knowledge and democratic social change (Greenwood 2007). The goal of such a pragmatically oriented inquiry is to advance the workability of human praxis; hence, participation is here

'not just a moral value' but essential for a successful inquiry into the complexity of the problems addressed (Greenwood 2007, p. 131). The assumption of the pragmatic approach is that complexity of the reality we are trying to comprehend requires the knowledge and expertise of a broad and diverse array of stakeholders.

From the perspective of the practical utility of social research for public management practitioners, it is especially important that the pragmatist approach is problem-oriented (Greenwood 2007; Ansell 2011). It is joint action in response to the problem that enables academics and practitioners to gain valid knowledge and seek an effective solution (Strumińska-Kutra 2016). In this sense, engaging into participatory inquiry seems a very promising activity for both practitioners and academics. Given research conclusions presented in this book, a research process in which collective reflection and action in response to the problem are intertwined seems to deliver a perfect framework for advancing and developing the capacity to learn and perform good governance. Within this research framework, "researchers, policymakers, and the public form mutual learning systems" (Robinson 1992) and collaborative research can become an instrument of metagovernance—understood as activities aimed at reflecting on governance and rebalancing the mix of governance modes (Jessop 2011).

Some researchers explicitly suggest that participatory research approaches deliver useful patterns for the governance of sustainability problems (the idea known as 'transdisciplinarity' in the field of sustainability research Popa et al. 2015; Ansell and Geyer 2016). They claim that this kind of research (and governance, as the author of this book believes) becomes reflexive and turns into a "socially-mediated process of problem-solving based on experimentation, learning and context specificity" (2015, p. 48). Promoting this kind of research may be the most relevant answer to the question about the way in which we can ensure that social research matters for public administration and, more specifically for the institutionalization of continuous learning within public administration structures.

Table 9.1 summarizes the above considerations. It begins by addressing the question on the relevance of particular research for practitioners facing a specific problem in a given context. When using knowledge from

Table 9.1 Types of research relevant for developing a capacity for learning and good governance in public administration

Type of research	Context sensitivity (practitioners perspective)	Type of knowledge	Role of researcher	Role of practitioner	Knowledge production and application	Answer to the theory-practice gap
Model-driven	Low	Rule-based	Knowledge producer	Knowledge user	Separate	Communication
Extrapolation based	Middle	Context-based	Knowledge producer	Knowledge user	Separate	Communication
Collaborative	High	Context-based and action-based	Knowledge producer and knowledge user	Knowledge user and producer	Intertwine	Research design

model-driven research, practitioner gains general information about what might be important for performing good governance. She is provided with an explanation of mutual connections between phenomena, for example, that good governance and governance learning are influenced by social trust, the diversity of professional orientations reflecting different governance modes, the existence of organizational and institutional solutions enabling multilevel and multijurisdictional collaborations, and so on. Familiarity with these rules equips the practitioner with 'design principles'. Yet the rules are abstract and the practitioner will need to learn whether and how they work in practice. Ethnographies and case studies deliver knowledge enabling practitioners to *understand* how things work in actual situations and how are they interconnected. In other words, this kind of research helps them to develop context-sensitive knowledge, which is of crucial importance for the implementation of any idea. It stimulates their imagination and prepares them for the inevitable failures. Collaborative research is the only design directly engaged into the development of the capacity for learning and good governance. This is why, from the perspective of a practitioner participating in the collaborative process, its context sensitivity (and utility) is highest. Importantly, this kind of research still enables the development of narrative descriptions, as well as theoretical generalization, meaningful for both academics and practitioners.

9.2 Models of the Science-Society Relationship: Towards the Institutionalization of Engaged Methodology in Public Management and Governance Studies

Despite this perfect match, collaborative research methods and action research specifically are rarely applied in public management and governance studies and still are described as 'emerging' and outside the mainstream' (Bartels and Wittmayer 2018). It is not uncommon for action research to be accused of too much action and not enough research,

which creates an impression that it is performed rather on the fringes of the academia, or even beyond (Levin and Greenwood 2011). The problem of 'action bias' at the expense of knowledge production is not inherent in action research or in any other collaborative research approaches. Rather it is a consequence of how we, academics and practitioners, tend to conceive the science-society relationship.

When implementing collaborative research, one stumbles on major obstacles in both academic and non-academic environments. Among the academia, engaged scientists are regarded with confusion (Levin and Greenwood 2011; Hale 2008), financing and professional assessment schemes do not promote this kind of research and involvement into practice. Public imagination of social research often leaves the participants of Action Research puzzled about the 'democratic role' adopted by the researcher. Non-academic participants face the consequences of challenging "the divisions of labor between knower-researchers and the known-researched" (Eikeland 2012), but their visions of social (scientific) research are incongruent with the visions of either the Action Research community or the broader community of engaged scholars. This state of affairs continues despite the growing fascination with collaborative approaches to governance: collaborative governance itself, coproduction of public services, and so on. Strangely enough, most of the time researchers remain excluded from collaborative communities they make research *on,* and not *with* them.

In other words, action research as well as other forms of collaborative research (like Participatory Action Research; Grant et al. 2013, critical participatory action research CPAR; Kemmis, 2013, interactive research; Ansell 2007) remains under-institutionalized within the public and the academic sphere. Confusion around the Action Research project designed to find an answer to the public dispute and solve the problem of market location provides a good example (see Chaps. 5 and 8). Academics from the Polish Sociological Association responded when addressed directly by a practitioner, that is, the municipality Mayor, asking for their help. They prepared a project whose aim was to 'develop a systemic infrastructure for dialogue between district authorities and district inhabitants in the matters of spatial planning'. They proposed an Action Research approach engaging participants into a process directly linking knowledge production to problem-solving action. Practical and theoretical knowledge on

public dispute resolution was to be gained. Yet, for some of the officials, including the former and the new Vice President, the role adopted by academics was rather confusing and out of place. They did not know how to engage into this collaborative project. The former Vice President delegated the steering of the process to researchers, without—obviously delegating to them the decision-making power. In this new situation, participants—researchers, external stakeholders and officials themselves—were not sure of the framework within which they were acting and, above all, whether and how their actions relate to practical implementation. After an entire year of attempts at defining the rights and responsibilities of those engaged, the project was closed, because the newly appointed Vice President was not interested in participating. He could not imagine any use for researchers in this particular situation. According to him, researchers' work involves mainly the gathering of information (preferably with the use of a questionnaire),[2] and providing ready results to the public or to practitioners (for a discussion of practitioners, responses towards participatory approaches to research also see Meyerson and Kolb 2000; Pedersen and Olesen 2008; Arieli et al. 2009). Despite the fact that the new Vice President was able to solve this particular dispute, a valuable opportunity was lost. As the analysis shows (see Chaps. 5 and 8), the Vice President was focused on ad hoc problem-solving, not taking into consideration a long-term perspective aimed at building an institutional and organizational infrastructure for dialogue, multijurisdictional and multilevel management. This infrastructure would enhance the capacity for good governance and learning even when the new Vice President leaves the office. In this sense, research goals developed by the PSA project would complement the approach adopted by the Vice President.

General public perceptions of plausible social research are deeply rooted in the non-dialogical, linear model of science, which is not able to give legitimacy to a research enterprise that treats Action Research as methodology (Greenwood and Levin 2007). The 'non-traditional' ways of doing research are unpopular (Gaventa and Cornwall 2013), not merely because they are new, and therefore not yet rooted in public imagination, but because they contradict the legitimized method of scientific research. AR seen as a scientific tool for enhancing reflexive management or policy mak-

ing will never gain sufficient legitimacy under the linear paradigm of science. The linear model justifies the social utility of science by assuring fluent transition from basic research and applied research undertaken by scientists, to the implementation of results by practitioners (e.g. politicians, officials, managers). Science should be simultaneously useful for and separate from politics and policy (Pielke 2007). In this model, the production of scientific knowledge is separated from action (Greenwood 2007). Activities aimed at sustaining these assumptions lead to various pathologies, that is, instrumentalization of science in public debate, especially through the (ab)use of 'objective' scientific arguments in value-laden discussions. Yet, the source of this pathology is not the mere engagement of a scientist, but pretending that engagement is unusual for a scientist. In fact, the linear model enhances such pathological tendencies; they are linked to the conviction that scientific resolutions are an answer to political and policy dilemmas. This leads us to the conclusion that if science is able to resolve disputes, politics becomes obsolete. What legitimacy do scientists have to make decisions on behalf of society? The answer to this question sets the limits of the role of (social) science within the political debate.

This does not mean that science does not have a place in a debate in which values are involved. The stakeholder model of science encompasses value-related matters, allowing the identification of additional roles that scientists can play in the decision-making processes (Pielke 2007). It encompasses concepts like Mode 2 knowledge (Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons 2001), use-inspired research (Stokes 1995), well-ordered science (Kitcher 2001), and post-normal science (Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993). Within these approaches, production of knowledge is connected to the social need and, hence, integrates value issues. In contrast to the traditional model of science-society relationship, knowledge production and knowledge use are not connected linearly but are intertwined. This debate would help to solve important problems of relations between science and society. What is more, this debate is necessary to produce legitimacy for collaborative research approaches. Performing this debate means performing institutional work in favour of an alternative framing of the public role of science. It has been recognized by a number of social scientists, for example, Levin and Greenwood, who call for reforming the relationship between researchers, universities, and societies (Levin and Greenwood

2011). They indicate politically informed AR, inquiry committed to praxis and social change, as a vehicle that will allow this transformation to take place. My point of view is similar, even though I suggest that the discussion could be reframed around the core problem: the relation between scientists and politics and policy making, and the systemic aspects preventing the adaptation of alternative perspectives.

Adopting the stakeholder model of science has yet another advantage when compared to the linear model. Abandoning the image of a one-way flow of knowledge from science to society, politics or policy communities renders the alternative model more resilient in the face of power asymmetries. Neither modernist-empiricist, not interpretive approaches address the fact that scientific results may be used not for enlightenment and learning, but as a tool in the political fight for power (Strumińska-Kutra 2016). Even if researchers, for example, those representing the interpretive and critical tradition, are aware of this danger, they have very limited tools to counteract the abuse or mitigate ethical risks connected to their project. It is primarily due to the fact that the phase of research and knowledge production is separated from the phase of action, while it is precisely that part that reveals power asymmetries (Strumińska-Kutra 2016).

To sum up, attempts to bring Action Research into public management and related disciplines go hand in hand with claims that social science should be closely related to real needs and problems of society (Burawoy 2004; Hale 2008; Greenwood 2007; Van de Ven 2007). This trend resulted in the development of engaged versions of sociology or anthropology. Public sociology and anthropology seek to bring these disciplines to the public, so that they reach beyond the academia, in order to promote dialogue about issues that affect the fate of society and to transform them into a vehicle empowering non-elites (Burawoy 2004).

I argue here that an engaged version of public management studies may be capable of an original input into the enterprise of building public (engaged) social science; thus far, it has mostly taken the form of advocacy in relation to a specific issue or a (disadvantaged) group. In this framework, which I shall call Public Action Research, the researcher does not affiliate with any interest group.[3] Instead she or he enhances the demo-

cratic process of bargaining between different value-based, and thus inevitably conflicting perspectives present within a local community (Rayner 2003). This, in turn, should result in broadening the scope of choices for those participating in the decision-making process, and in the creation of new and innovative policy alternatives. Such alternatives have the potential to reshape political dynamics and enable action (Pielke 2007).

A research methodology triggering and enacting such collaborative process would facilitate governance learning and produce knowledge on governance learning. This kind of research may support and contribute to developing inclusive and reflexive decision-making institutions. Any project designed within the framework of Public Action Research in public management or governance studies would help to explore:

– the relations of power in action and their significance for both processes and outcomes of governance;
– how individuals, institutions and public organizations continually refine and improve their values, knowledge and practice;
– the processes of designing inclusive decision-making institutions and their role in solving complex governance problems.

Yet for this kind of research to be instrumental in institutionalizing learning and reflection, it needs to be institutionalized first within the public and academic space. If, as a scientist, you are looking for a transformative change, you cannot shy away from action—you cannot learn to swim without getting wet.

Notes

1. In the sense of Weberian *Verstehen.*
2. When talking to his assistant, he described my research as 'weird' because I was not using a questionnaire.
3. Which does not mean she is neutral—performing this role is challenging and requires a reflective attitude towards one's own ideologies and values, as well as mindful engagement with others.

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Methodological Annex

Methodological Approach

Just as in other fields, public management and governance studies oscillate between two methodological approaches: positivist—modernist empiricist, and postmodern—interpretive. In the first, researchers cease their participation in the world they study, avoid affecting the situation they enquire, standardize the collection of data, bracket external conditions, and make samples representative (Burawoy 1998, p. 5). Although description is important for them, most 'positivist' researchers aim to develop an explanation of a particular sort, one that identifies the *causes* of a phenomenon. Typically it is done through testing causal hypotheses. The goal of interpretive research, by contrast, is to provide *reasons* for a phenomenon (Haverland and Yanow 2012) by illuminating its local context and meanings attached to it. When describing the difference, Haverland and Yanow refer to the famous anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who claimed that such a meaning-focused research approach is driven by a desire to gain "access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them" (Geertz 1973). The translation of interpretive approach into research method resulted in a wide-

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spread use of inductive approaches, that is, generating theories grounded in empirical data. Grounded theory (despite of its positivists roots, Glaser and Strauss 1967) and case studies used for theory development became flagships of the interpretive enterprise (Eisenhardt 1989, 1991; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Flyvbjerg 2006; Gerring 2007; Silvermann 2005; Stake 2005; Hijmans and Wester 2010).

Yet inductive approaches[1] do not rise up to an important challenge that lies in casting beyond the specific and unique ethnographic context to anchor individual micro studies, to the wider macro-social relations within which they are embedded (Wadham and Warren 2014). I saw this challenge as particularly relevant to inquiring into the governance turn, which emerges on the international and national level and infiltrates specific public organizations and local micro-management practices. I was interested in capturing both "structuralist moments" (Hallet and Ventresca 2006) i.e. top-down processes of structures influencing local practices, and bottom-up, "constructivist moments" (Hallet and Ventresca 2006), within which structures are maintained, modified, and disrupted by local practices. Institutional theory delivered an analytical tool for the exploration of these two intertwined processes, and it was adopted at the very start of the research process. In this sense, case study was used not in order to generate a theory but in order to supplement and modify it. The methodological approach that best suited this endeavour was the extended case method.

First of all, the extended case method is by definition rooted in *pre-existing theories*. It aims to rebuild theory by comparing it to what 'actually happens'. Engagement in the field is important for a reflexive[2] development and refinement of theory, which is capable of accommodating anomalies (Kuhn 1962)—in this case, events that actually occur, but have not been anticipated by a given theory. In other words, the theory is a flexible tool which guides the researcher's dialogue with participants about what is happening in practice.

The assumption that practice can inform theory fits my original goal of building a practice-based theory of governance learning and institutionalization. There were some theoretical concepts, like single-loop and double-loop learning, institutional isomorphism or structure agency interaction that guided the analysis from the very start. Yet the observation of governance practice filled the framework with the new content and supplemented it with new or modified theoretical concepts. The concept of

governance void or modified understanding of surprise, as a collective phenomenon penetrated by institutions, are the examples. Observation of practice also guided the researcher to reach out for established theoretical concepts, for example institutional entrepreneurship and innovation or institutional leadership. Processes and phenomena emerging from the analysis prompted integration of these concepts into the practice-based framework of governance learning and institutional change. Last but not least, through the observation of practice, the focus of research was shifted towards questions relatively under-researched in public management and governance studies literature, although significant from both theoretical and practical point of view: Why do organization members learn? Is learning always performed for the public good? How are the processes of learning and institutionalization permeated by power? How does institutions influence learning and, eventually, how can learning be institutionalized?

Another advantage of the extended case method important for the inquiry was its sensitivity to the process of *macro–meso–micro transitions*. Within this approach, 'a case' is rooted in a particular historical, political and social context, and retracing these linkages forms an important part of the inquiry. This assumption was in line with my intent to interpret the phenomena of governance turn and governance learning by linking micro level practices to organizational structures and institutional arrangements pervading the organizational environment.

The practice-based framework of governance learning and institutionalization has limitations in terms of generalisability. Although it focuses on institutional change and learning, it retraces processes of learning influenced and triggered by forces outside the organisation (by external stakeholders, external institutions), to a large extent coercive. Second, it is based on research conducted within a specific institutional environment, where participatory governance institutions are introduced into an environment characterized by weak state institutions, underdeveloped civil society, and the domination of the executive that disrupts the equilibrium of the checks and balances mechanisms (Rządca and Strumińska-Kutra 2016).

Addressing the above limitations, any future research aimed at an elaboration and modification of the proposed model should investigate any external pressure mechanisms of normative and mimetic nature, as well as internal organisational processes. It would also be necessary to introduce

variation into institutional contexts; for example, multiple and effective institutions empowering stakeholders versus the few and ineffective, multiple and effective institutions, and actors delivering mimetic and normative pressures versus the few and ineffective, and so on.

Research Methods, Data Sources, and Analysis

The selection of cases followed the logic of theoretical sampling (Silverman 2005). Its goal was to capture theoretically important qualities of governance that is, multijurisdictionality and multilevel character and inclusion of non-governmental actors (Bevir 2011). Public disputes around local problems were selected as the subject of analysis, because they require collaborative governance strategies and challenge public agencies to learn and institutionalize new, collaborative governance modes. A detailed explanation of the relationship between public disputes and theoretical concepts of institutions and learning provided given in Chap. 3. Within this section, the focus is research methods and data sources only briefly mentioned in the main text of the book.

As mentioned in Chap. 3, all cases draw on three main sources of data, namely: (1) archival sources: official documents (administrative decisions, lawsuits, local government resolutions, open letters, organizational documents, minutes from meetings of municipal and provincial councils), media reports (newspaper and TV releases, interviews), the Internet (webpages of public agencies, protesters committees, etc.); (2) interviews with key actors; (3) observation (of public meetings, protests, open days, etc.) The set of research methods applied includes content analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Table A.1 presents detailed information about data sources and research methods used in each case.

Interviews The interviewees were selected owing to their involvement in the public dispute and problem management. On the public administration side, these were usually elected officials and civil service bureaucrats who participated either in public meetings or in internal public administration meetings devoted to a given problem. These officials were respon-

Table A.1 Data sources and methods

Case	Methods and data sources			Timespan covered by empirical data and field work
	interviews	Archival sources	Observation	
Schools	The Mayor, a municipality official, two councillors, a local community representative, the principal (6 interviewees, 4 interviews)[a]	Official documents (minutes from council meetings, resolutions taken by the Council etc.) Newspaper articles Internet platform devoted to local issues	Council meeting (approx. 4 hours)	Autumn 2011–Autumn 2017 Field work: Summer 2012
Market location	The Vice President, the head of the Social Communication Department (SCD), an employee of the SCD, the Mayor, a municipality councillor, a mediator, a representative of merchants, a representative of the local community, two municipality officials (10 interviewees, 6 interviews)	Official documents, e.g. minutes from Council meetings Newspaper articles Organizational documents (report on the PSA project, minutes from mediation meetings, open letters)	–	Summer 2008–Summer 2016 Field work: Spring 2013–Autumn 2013

(*continued*)

Table A.1 (continued)

Case	Methods and data sources			Timespan covered by empirical data and field work
	interviews	Archival sources	Observation	
WWTP	A regional agency representative, the head of the SCD[b], the Infrastructure Department director, a representative of the investor, a representative of an environmental NGO, a representative of the property owners' association[c] (5 interviews)	Official documents (minutes from public meetings, administrative decisions, lawsuits, local government resolutions, investment documents e.g. the Environmental Impact Assessment report) Protesters' Committee's website (news, open letters), Newspaper articles	Public meetings, open days at the WWTP (approx. 15 hours)	Winter 1998–Autumn 2013 Field work: Summer 2007–Autumn 2009
Anti-flood facilities	A central agency representative, a representative of the investor (Regional Agency), an academic expert (professor invited to participate in a public meeting), two Mayors, a councillor, a representative of the local community (7 interviews)	Official documents (minutes from Council meetings and Council resolutions) Newspaper articles, Organizational documents (e.g. PowerPoint presentations on the flood prevention system, flood prevention programme)	–	Spring 2010–Autumn 2017 Field work: Autumn 2013–Spring 2014

[a]In some situations two people were interviewed within the same meeting

[b]SCD director was interviewed once; the interview scenario covered both disputes (about the market location and about the WWTP)

[c]A non-profit organization helping property owners to secure their rights, for example, when claiming compensations in cases where the value of property diminishes due to public investments in the area

sible for the decision-making process or for providing information used in the decision-making process. Depending on the case, representatives of different levels of local government were interviewed, as well as representatives of central public agencies. The latter are typically involved when decisions regarding the environment are made (here: the WWTP and anti-flood facilities). Similarly, within a given public organization responsible for 'handling a dispute', representatives of different hierarchical levels were interviewed, ranging from elected officials, to department heads, to 'regular' civil service bureaucrats.

As for non-governmental actors involved in the dispute, those interviewed represented formal and informal groups organizing local community members, interest groups (e.g. merchants), or other NGOs operating locally and involved in the conflict. In two cases (market location and anti-flood facilities), external experts involved in the dispute were interviewed (in the WWTP case, experts' perspectives were captured during participant observation and document analysis).

The semi-structured, open interviews consisted of four sections: (1) the history of the dispute; (2) major actors involved, their actions and lines of argument; (3) the role different actors played in the process, (4) the evaluation of the process. Interview took on average 60 minutes; all were recorded and transcribed. The purpose of interviews was neither to reconstruct the history of the process nor to evaluate whether it was successful or not, but rather to learn about participants' perspective, find out what they found reasonable or unjustified, what they saw as success or failure, natural or odd. What interviewees were taking for granted and thought valuable and what they considered weird and outrageous were important indicators of whether or not certain governance practices are institutionalized. All interviewees expressed their consent to be interviewed, recorded, and agreed for the transcribed interviews to be analyzed. All cases are anonymized—the names of locations and organizations have been changed. Those who were interviewed or whose names appear in archival documents are referred to by their position within a given social setting (councilor, mayor, department director, local community representative).

Archival sources, such as official documents, administrative decisions or newspaper articles were treated as the emanation of certain ways of thinking about public management and governance; they also played an

important role in reconstructing the chronology of events. Minutes of Council meetings—that is, general meetings and meetings of special committees—were among the most important documents used as data sources. These 30–40-page publicly accessible documents provide researchers (or anyone else interested) with relatively accurate descriptions of discussions and the course of meetings. Although minutes are not literal transcripts, they reflect the original language of discussion, including jokes, irony (e.g. see the quote opening Chap. 4). First, all minutes from Council meetings that took place during disputes were scanned in search of key words referring to the dispute (school, market, WWTP, IP, barriers, flood). An in-depth analysis was carried out only with respect to those parts in which issues pertaining to the dispute and the problem behind it. Council meetings take place once a month. Minutes from the meetings of Council committees were taken into account only when it was ascertained that an issue related to the dispute was discussed—for example, minutes of committee meetings were an important source of data in the case of schools, as it was during the meetings that solutions were initially accepted. The WWTP case was an exception in this respect, as the City Council was less involved and the major scene of the dispute were public meetings and direct interactions between city officials and protesters.

Another important category of documents used as data sources were newspaper articles and websites, including Internet platforms created by local communities. The latter in particular proved an invaluable source of data. In the case of the WWTP, they actually substituted interviews with representatives of the Protesters' Committee. After an initial attempt at contacting a committee representative, I decided against an interview. During our telephone conversation, the representative said: "I have googled you. I saw that you deal with sustainable development and environmental justice issues. This is very good, you can be of a great help for us!" He expected me to become an Issue Advocate (Pielke 2007), an expectation I could not fulfil given my plan to reconstruct the process rather than to intervene into it[3] (see Chap. 9 for some reflections on how power struggle infiltrates the research act).

Participatory observation was only used in two cases. In the school case, I participated in a Council meeting. In the WWTP case, I took part in a large (approx. 700 participants) public meeting held in the City Hall and in Open Days organized in the plant. Observation time covered by field

notes ranged between two hours (Council meeting and the visit to the plant) and eight hours (the public meeting).

Summarizing, combining various methods (methodological triangulation) and data sources (data triangulation) within a complex research process enabled a more complete description and comprehensive understanding of the cases. The process of data collection and interpretation was discussed within a team of two researchers.

In each case, the research process itself took place in three phases: (1) retrospective data collection preparing for the field work; (2) field work either during the public dispute or following the dispute (although no later than with a year); (3) retrospective data collection after the main protests had ceased. In the latter phase, data gathering overlapped with data analysis. The last empirical data were collected in the autumn of 2017.

Data Analysis Time series analysis was used in order to analyse each case. It helped to develop sequences of actions that could be turned into a historical narrative, further enabling the identification of changes in convictions and practices that took place over time. The decision-making process about the way in which to manage a given public problem and the public dispute it has sparked off (e.g. how to manage flood security and deal with protests against barriers) was at the core of the analysis. Subsequent phases of the process were distinguished according to the existence of continuity in the context and actions being pursued within them, but discontinuities at their frontiers (Denis and Langley 2001). Time frames of events were defined either on the basis of change of attitudes of key participants, or by major shifts in the actors' perception of the problem and/or public management practice. Four main categories for analysis were identified within each period. The first consisted of capturing pressure for change within governance patterns experienced by the public organization (sources of pressures, their perception in the organization). The second category consisted of the constellation of actors—both from the public organisation and outside of it—involved in the decision-making process (identification of important actors and their position in terms of power, their roles, and degree of complementarity in terms of governance perceptions). The third category referred to actions

taken by actors and their framings (what was done, kinds of strategies used and how they were framed by actors). Within this category the central phenomenon was the one of single-and double-loop learning (using and advancing a given governance mode, a critical reflection upon it, and replacing it for another). The fourth category focused on the effects of actions and tactics used by actors (prevailing kinds of actions and ways of thinking, signs of this prevalence, e.g. new organizational procedures, structures, redefinition of the old etc.). Here, the phenomenon of institutionalization was of crucial importance.

Subsequent periods involved not only building a narrative of a case, but they were used to compare the cases under examination. Through the comparison of periods across the cases, process models emerged, for example, describing the reflexive practice of governance (see Sect. 8.2 and Table 8.2), or the model illustrating the role of institutional entrepreneurship in the process of governance institutionalization (see Sect. 8.3 and Fig. 8.2).

Notes

1. Another unexplored issue is how these 'inductive' approaches deal with the existing theories at the outset of research. A pure induction is non-existent; our perception is possible because we categorize observations. Karl Popper used to say to his students: "Take pencil and paper; carefully observe, and write down what you have observed!" "They asked, of course, what I wanted them to observe. Clearly, the instruction, 'Observe!' is absurd. (…) Observation is always selective It needs a chosen object, a definite task, an interest, a point of view, a problem. And its description presupposes a descriptive language, with property words; it presupposes similarity and classification, which in their turn presuppose interests, points of view, and problems." (Popper 1963, p. 61). That is why the use of theoretical concepts at the beginning of the research process should be problematized even within inductive studies (see Charmaz 2005; Silvermann 2005).

2. Burawoy calls it the reflexive model of science (1998, p. 5).
3. It is an important reminder that regardless of the researcher's intention, a research act can be and often *is* used in the political struggle (Strumińska-Kutra 2016). This is why the question about ways in which science can be used in politics and policy making in order to advance the common good without compromising the scientific ethos is of crucial importance. I attempt to initiate this discussion in the last chapter of this book.

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