

Preserving community initiatives in times of cutbacks

Master Thesis about the strategies of community initiatives during cutbacks to adapt and continue

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Preface

This thesis was made, not only to gain the Master of science degree, but also to study something I personally experienced. Finding a local community initiative, a youth center, was an important part of my life and still is. The youth center allowed me to develop personal skills, organizational skills and find long-lasting friendships. As a group of young volunteers, we tried to uphold and create a youth center to provide similar opportunities and experiences for other young people.

When the economic crisis hit, the Netherlands and municipalities had to cut back on their spending, the youth center I was volunteering in was targeted and cut back multiple times. These cutbacks were a challenge we as a group had to overcome to make sure the initiative we all found important was continued. These times were uncertain and it often was difficult to remain motivated.

Never during these times did we find the clarity of mind or the time to approach these challenges scientifically. We did what we felt was the right choice to continue our efforts as a youth center. When continuing my studies into public administration I came to realize the importance of community initiatives like my own youth center. In times of a retreating government, changing from a welfare state into a participation society, many facilities would have to be organized by the community and not the government. It was this realization that led me to choosing cutbacks on community initiatives as a subject for my thesis.

During my studies I enjoyed the different stories of community initiatives that dealt with cutbacks and it helped me understand what I had experienced. I want to thank them for their support and time and I hope that, in turn, this thesis provides knowledge and wisdom for future initiatives and policy makers in times of cutbacks on such important initiatives.

To this day, I remain a frequent visitor of the youth center that shaped me into who I am today.

Management Summary

The economic crisis starting in 2008 led to cutbacks in the Dutch municipalities. Some of these cutbacks were on funding for community initiatives. Community initiatives are defined by Denters (2016):

An activity initiated by citizens as a group, where this activity is aimed at common interest and where citizens themselves decide both about the aims and means of their project and actively participate in the implementation of their project (Denters, 2016, p. 232)

This master thesis studies community initiatives that had dealt with cutbacks trying to understand how some of these initiatives were able to continue. This was done with the following research question:

What strategies did facility-oriented community initiatives adopt after cutbacks and what were the effects of their strategies on the initiative's continuity?

Six community initiatives in the Netherlands were studied. The ACTIE model (Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014) was used to describe the initiatives' situation before cutbacks and their strategy to overcome the cutbacks.

ACTIE stands for: **A**ims & **A**mbitions, **C**ontacts, **T**alents & **T**ime, **I**nstitutionalization and **E**mpathy. A is about motivation of the participants. C whether or not the participants have valuable contacts. T is about input in terms of money, skills, time and knowledge. I and E look at the municipality's attitude, policies and rules (Denters, 2016; Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014; Denters, Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013).

The thesis was done with a comparative case study. Lists were made with initiatives that dealt with cutbacks that would lead to continuity problems. The selected initiatives were approached and a date would be set for an interview to study their strategies. Semi-structured interviews (using ACTIE) helped to guide the interviews. Afterwards the initiative received a summary of their interview and was asked to confirm and allow the use of the text as data for this study. For anonymity and generalization purposes these initiatives were numbered and not named and their identity was hidden. The results are summarized in the table below.

Initiative	Existence	Aims & ambitions, Contacts, Talents	Institutionalization, Empathy
I	Still exists	Changed its activities to reduce costs Used existing contacts to find sponsoring Input of private funds	Cutbacks in multiple decisions Incidental funding as alternative No support. After elections support improved
II	No longer exists	Was unable to change Mobilized to resist Lack of time from participants to change	Cutback in a single decision Policy to stop funding target-groups Offered partial funding after mobilization
III	Still exists	Changed views on generating revenue Improved contacts with municipality & community Replaced people with hampering views	Cutbacks were delivered in multiple decisions No understanding and support, improved after strategy which led to cancelling a cutback proposal
IV	Still exists (merged)	Existing contacts provided prior knowledge Used prior knowledge to propose merger Merger led to friction with participants & partners	Municipality accepted proposal Municipality added a third organization to merger but did not understand effects of that addition
V	Still exists (split)	Spread spending to continue longer Used contacts to find new funding Was forced to split its activities involuntarily	Policy was to stop structural funding Use of contacts changed cutback from single large cutback to multiple rounds, spread over time
VI	Still exists	Remained similar Created support among participants Generated more revenue from participants	The cutback was delivered in multiple rounds, announced in a single decision. Very late communication about cutback decision

When looking at the 'aims and ambitions' of the initiatives it seems most initiatives kept similar goals. That however, does not mean that aims and ambitions have no effect on continuity. With 'contacts', there seem to be three strategies; finding new partners to reduce costs or find new sources of income, mobilize participants to resist the decision and increase initiative's image towards community and municipality to create goodwill (indirect resistance). Talents and time shows 'talents' is a broad term and participants that lack certain parts can still have useful other talents. None of the initiatives was able to increase talents in a short time by training or recruiting. Using existing talents is important.

Institutionalization shows that structural funding often changed to incidental funding to deliver cutbacks. Which was a general strategy to reduce structural spending. This policy however created problems for initiatives that depend on such funding for structural costs. Most cutbacks were in multiple rounds. Some initiatives were informed in a single decision, others were uncertain of their funding for multiple rounds. It turned out that 'empathy' was mostly displayed in communication. Most initiatives reported very little room to talk and only being involved after the cutback decision was already made. Comparing I and E it seems that Institutionalization offers more options for strategy.

For recommendations there are two groups to consider; initiatives and municipalities.

For community initiatives there are two important notes:

- Find and use talents
- Ensure goodwill through contacts

For municipalities there are a few things to consider:

- Create flexibility
- Offer support and help to find strengths
- Use targeted cuts

Contents

- 1. Introduction 2
 - 1.1 Community initiatives 2
 - 1.2 Research question 2
 - 1.3 Continuity 3
 - 1.4 Relevance 3
- 2. Theoretical framework 4
 - 2.1 SES-model, Rational Choice, Opportunity 4
 - 2.2 Civic Voluntarism 4
 - 2.2.1 Resources 5
 - 2.2.2 Engagement 5
 - 2.2.3 Mobilization 5
 - 2.3 CLEAR Model 5
 - 2.4 ACTIE Model 6
 - 2.4.1 Institutionalization & Empathy in light of cutbacks 9
 - 2.5 framework conclusion 10
- 3. Research Design 11
 - 3.1 Research Design 11
 - 3.1.1 Units & Setting 11
 - 3.1.2 Data & Variables: Interviews 12
 - 3.1.3 Results and anonymity 12
 - 3.2 Limits and side notes 13
- 4. Research results 14
 - Initiative I 14
 - Initiative II 17
 - Initiative III 20
 - Initiative IV 23
 - Initiative V 26
 - Initiative VI 29
 - 4.3 Findings summary 31
- 5. Conclusions 32
 - 5.1 Recommendations 34
 - 5.2 Relevance & future research 36
 - 5.3 Reflection 36
- References 37
- Tables & figures 38
- Appendix 1 39
 - Interview questions Initiatives 39

1. Introduction

A worldwide economic depression began around 2008 and had devastating effects, not only for the EU and national governments, but also the local level. In the Netherlands, the national government decreased the budget municipalities received and they in turn had to re-evaluate their spending, including the subsidies for community initiatives. Such initiatives included neighborhood centers, playgrounds, youth centers and interest groups. Oftentimes these initiatives are initiated and ran by volunteers in independent civic organizations that are subsidized by the local government.

During these re-evaluations of spending, some initiatives that received funding from the municipality got cut back. These initiatives had to find ways to continue their activities with less funding. Some were successful, others were not.

In the first speech of the new Dutch King in 2013 the change from a 'welfare state' into a 'participation society' was described as a reform that would prepare the economy for the future and change facilities to meet today's requirements. At the same time cutbacks were being delivered to community initiatives that fit into the idea of that 'participation society'. After a few years it is valuable to study what effects these reforms had on community initiatives and the facilities they upheld.

1.1 Community initiatives

Community initiatives are described in literature. Denters (2016) defines them as:

An activity initiated by citizens as a group, where this activity is aimed at common interest and where citizens themselves decide both about the aims and means of their project and actively participate in the implementation of their project (Denters, 2016, p. 232)

For this thesis, initiatives that aim at providing a permanent facility are of particular interest. Examples are a neighborhood center, playground or a service-point for the community. Such initiatives often are depending on funding because of costs related to a 'permanent facility'. They need to pay rent and cover structural costs such as water and electricity. When their funding is cut back, their costs remain the same. These initiatives have to develop strategies to cover their costs to be able to continue.

1.2 Research question

This master thesis studies facility-oriented community initiatives that had to deal with cutbacks in the recent past (2010-2015). The goal is to understand how some of these initiatives were able to continue or not, after a decrease in funding, and with this knowledge help preserve such initiatives in the future. This leads to the following research question:

What strategies did facility-oriented community initiatives adopt after cutbacks and what were the effects of their strategies on the initiative's continuity?

The goal is to understand what strategies initiatives adopted to deal with cutbacks. This helps understand which factors affect 'continuity' of the initiative and can be seen as important explanatory variables. Using a framework helps to understand the initiatives on a more theoretical level. To do this, the ACTIE-model (Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014) will be used.

The basic concept is that there are multiple factors that affect initiatives. These factors are summarized in the ACTIE-acronym, where the various letters stand for:

- Aims & Ambitions
- Contacts
- Talents & Time
- Institutionalization
- Empathy

The factors of ACTIE are all affecting community initiatives in different ways. Aims and ambitions is about the motivation of the participants. Contacts is whether or not the participants have valuable contacts. Talents and time is about the input of participants like money, skills, time and knowledge. Institutionalization and Empathy are factors that look at the municipality's attitude, policies and rules (Denters, 2016; Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014; Denters, Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013). In the next chapter this framework as well as the choice for using it will be explained further.

Describing the situation before cutbacks as well as their strategy will lead to a better understanding of how these affected the continuity. To perform this analysis multiple sub-questions have been drafted:

1. *What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?*
2. *What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?*
3. *What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?*
4. *What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?*

Answering these questions will give a summary of the situation before cutbacks, the meaning and size of the cutbacks and the strategies to deal with them. Before proceeding to the theoretical framework we will deal with the main dependent viable. What does continuity mean?

1.3 Continuity

This study is based on the idea that initiatives want to continue their activities and therefore adopt strategies to achieve this. Initiatives that did not try to adapt are not relevant. If the initiative did not use strategies with continuity in mind, there was no will or need to adapt which means the initiative is not relevant in the light of this study. These initiatives are therefore excluded during selection.

Table 1: Continuity outcomes

		Strategy was effective	
		Yes	No
Tried to adapt	Yes	Continued	Stopped
	No	<i>Not relevant</i>	<i>Not relevant</i>

An initiative can also try to adapt but not be able to make effective changes. These initiatives are also interesting because the initiative applied strategies that did not work, which helps to understand what strategies are effective. These strategies will be linked to the ACTIE model. Knowing what factors of ACTIE are important during cutbacks may help to support and preserve initiatives in the future.

1.4 Relevance

Some studies have already been performed on community Initiatives (Edelenbos & Meerkerk, 2016 ; Denters B. , Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013). However, this study focusses on initiatives that had dealt with cutbacks in an attempt to learn from these initiatives and use this information to help preserving similar initiatives in future. This also expands the ACTIE model further.

Not only does this study add on the existing research of the ACTIE model, it also tries to make practical use of it and provide a useful framework for municipalities and community initiatives. This can help municipalities and initiatives to more consciously discuss options during times of cutbacks and hopefully provide a basis for constructive conversations with the goal of continuity despite cutbacks.

When looking at this thesis with a broader scope; in recent years (2008-2015) a worldwide economic crisis confronted countries, municipalities and communities with cutbacks. These cutbacks are an event that brings both risks, such as discontinued initiatives, and opportunities, such as continuation of initiatives with other support than subsidizing. There are very few studies that provide insights in cutbacks and citizen participation and it can be helpful to develop insights or models that do this.

2. Theoretical framework

Community initiatives are in essence a form of citizen participation. Denters (2016) describes that “community initiatives’ is chosen rather than ‘citizens’ initiatives’, because in countries like Germany and Switzerland the term refers to a form of direct democracy in which voters can decide on a petition (signed by a minimum number of registered voters) (Denters, 2016, p. 248)’. However, that shows how close community initiatives are to theories about citizen participation. The choice for these theories is based on the idea that they explain the success and development of citizen/community initiatives and may also provide insights in their strategies and continuity during cutbacks.

This theoretical framework will explore theories related to ACTIE chronologically, summarizing theories that exist and are the foundations for the ACTIE model. The final section will explain the choice of the ACTIE-model over the similar CLEAR-model by comparing both theories.

2.1 SES-model, Rational Choice, Opportunity

In the 1970’s Verba and Nie wrote a book about citizen participation related to social equality. They studied the relations between people’s ‘socio economic status’ and ‘participation’. In the SES-model there are three factors that measure a person’s socio economic status; income, education and occupation. Using these three factors combined Verba and Nie tried to measure why some people participate, while others do not. They find that participation is strongly skewed towards people with a high socio-economic status (Verba & Nie, 1972).

Rational choice, a theory with its roots in economics, was used to describe participation in the 1950’s and 60’s by Downs (1957) and Olson (1965). Rational choice starts from the perspective of the individual and it’s interests and then describes the choices that individual would make. It is this view of self-interest, maximizing calculating individuals that makes it interesting to understand their participation in collective actions and public interest. Olson found there are three groups; privileged, latent and intermediate. The first group would gain more from participating than it would cost, the second would be able to ‘free ride’ without noticeable differences and the last will create noticeable differences if they do not participate. Finally, Olson concludes that collective action only works for groups who are able to exclude people who do not participate from benefitting (Olson, 1965).

Among others, Eisinger (1973) described ‘opportunity’ as a factor for political participation. The theory is summarized as the idea that participation movements are strongly dependent on political opportunity. This means the likeliness for groups to manipulate and access positions of power or a situation that encourages people to engage (Eisinger, 1973).

However, these theories had a very narrow view on participation, which was reason for Verba and other researchers to developed a new model. They developed the Civic Voluntarism model which is a combination of the three theories above.

2.2 Civic Voluntarism

When reading theories on community initiatives and citizen participation (a.e. Denters , Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013 or Lowndes & Pratchett, CLEAR: Understanding Citizen Participation in Local Government - and How to Make it Work Better, 2006) researchers mention to be building on a previous theory: Civic Voluntarism. Civic Voluntarism is a reaction on the Socio Economic Status theory (Verba & Nie, 1972). In a study by Verba, Schlozman and Brady they move beyond the Socio Economic Status and look into the needs of individuals to participate. They state that for citizens to participate, there are usually three factors involved; they are able to, but also people’s needs and motives, and the degree to which they are (de)mobilized to participate. Translated to their theory they speak of resources, engagement and mobilization (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995).

2.2.1 Resources

The theory of Verba *et al* states that a person has to be able to participate; they need the right resources. These are defined as money, skills and time. The possession of such resources is often related to the roles of the person in their daily life or; the Socio Economic Status of the individual.

The amount of money an individual earns is strongly related to the education they have. When participation is very dependent on money some social classes will lack the resource to participate.

Skills relates to things such as how persons represent themselves, how well they can speak and write or how able they are to organize something. Such skills are often learned in a job or by volunteering. These skills are important because being able to organize a meeting, writing a formal letter or speaking with a municipality official, have a strong influence on the success of participation.

Time is an interesting resource because it is less related to education or income. It is influenced by factors such as family and having a job. And having less free-time also means less time to participate. A person with a job may have more money, but less time (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995).

2.2.2 Engagement

Next to the idea of resources, the theory of Verba *et al* involves engagement. This term is a more psychological one. Engagement is about political interest, political efficacy, political information and partisanship. Verba *et al* admit that these terms are more vague than the 'resources' and should be used with care and also state that engagement is meaningless without the proper resources.

Important aspects of engagement are the motivations of the person for participating, or not. Often participants will be interested in politics and public issues. This means that a person who believes his input is meaningless will very likely not participate, but on the other hand a person who is very content with the local politics will not feel motivated to do so either (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995).

2.2.3 Mobilization

The aspect of mobilization in the Civic Voluntarism model refers to people being involved or asked to participate. According to Verba *et al* people may have the necessary resources and are properly engaged, but still remain inactive. When these people are asked and motivated to participate they are more likely to do so. This motivation can be done through decision-makers, but also family, friends or organizations they are a part of (Brady, Verba, & Schlozman, 1995).

The theory of Civic Voluntarism shows there are different factors that determine if a person will participate. These factors are useful when trying to understand how an organization can try to continue. Such factors are further developed in the CLEAR model by Lowndes and Pratchett (2006).

2.3 CLEAR Model

CLEAR is a model that looks into the different aspects that influence citizen initiatives. This builds upon foundations from earlier citizen initiative theories such as Civic Voluntarism. CLEAR stands for:

- *Can do—have the resources and knowledge to participate;*
 - *Like to—have a sense of attachment that reinforces participation;*
 - *Enabled to—are provided with the opportunity for participation;*
 - *Asked to—are mobilized through public agencies and civic channels;*
 - *Responded to—see evidence that their views have been considered.*
- (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006, p. 1)

In the summary of the CLEAR model it becomes clear that 'Can do' is related to resources such as the ones described in the Civic Voluntarism Model. 'Like to' is very close to the part of engagement and so are 'Enabled to', 'Asked to' and 'Responded to'. However, these theories are more detailed.

Can do

The C stands for 'Can Do' and refers to socio-economic factors. Very close to the theory of Civic Voluntarism, it relates to the traditional factors such as skills and resources which determine the ability to participate. These are skills such as speaking in public and organizing activities. Also access to important resources such as information and money are important to determine if a person is likely to participate. The resources are commonly more found around higher educated persons or the people of a higher socio-economic status (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006).

Like to

The L stands for 'Like to'. This aspect looks at the idea that people participate because they want to be part of something. In other words, the feeling of exclusion demotivates participation. If participation is strongly related to a certain group such as the rich or elderly, other groups are less likely to participate (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006).

Enabled to

'Enabled to' is the third aspect of the CLEAR. This aspect is related to the route between decision-makers and participants. Being part of a larger network with connections that are vital to successful participation is the focus of 'Enabled to'. Especially umbrella organizations can play an important role here because they create participation platforms. They can also help new groups become established as well as help them take the right steps to create contact with the decision-makers (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006).

Asked to

People are more likely to participate when they are asked to do so. Participation depends on whether or not people are asked and how they are asked. The strongest way to engage with participants is by direct contact from the decision-makers. This aspect does not only look into participants being asked, but also how. For example; some people are more likely to participate online while others rather join a public meeting. It is also important to evaluate if the participants will keep responding or rather respond once (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006).

Responded to

The last aspect of CLEAR is 'Responded to'. Participants have to believe that their participation makes a difference. Their input should be visible in the outcomes for them to stay motivated. People need to feel listened to for them to participate. This is also a very difficult aspect because in many projects there are different views from different participants and taking them all into account is not always possible. Increasing this aspect involves strengthening democratic values and accountability (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2006; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006).

2.4 ACTIE Model

The ACTIE model (Denters, 2016; Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014; Denters, Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013) was developed in the context of citizen initiatives, but can be broadened and used for many forms of citizen participation. Like the previous models, the ACTIE model also emphasizes the citizens' own initiatives. If people provide goods and services instead of the government, this can be an attractive alternative when downsizing local governments.

ACTIE stands for Aims and Ambitions, Contacts, Talents and Time, Institutionalization and Empathy. In short these aspects refer to how willing, able, invited and empowered citizens are to create and uphold initiatives. The ACT part focusses on the 'strategies' of the participants in the initiative, while I and E look at formal and informal rules, responsiveness and the attitude of the (Denters, 2016; Denters, Bakker, & Klok, 2014; Denters, Bakker, Oude Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013).

Aims & Ambitions

The aims and ambitions look at the motives of participants. There is a reason they provide the goods or services, knowing what that reason is can help in mobilizing and facilitating the initiative. Some participants may support the initiative because of a sense of duty, others may do it for the community.

In total Denters *et al* (2013) describe four different forms; aims, social motives, civic duty or the participants have a personal interest. With aims the participants want to solve a specific problem or contribute or organize to something specific that does not yet exist.

The second form of aims and ambitions Denters describes as social motives. This means the participants are motivated because they want to work with and meet other people. For these participants the specific theme or initiative is less important for their motivation to participate (Denters, Bakker, Oude-Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013).

A third possibility is the feeling of civic duty participants have. These participants feel that participating is something they have a duty to do. These participants may still feel particularly attracted to a certain initiative or theme, but are motivated by a sense of duty rather than the importance of the specific initiative (Denters, Bakker, Oude-Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013).

Finally participants may have a personal interest in the initiative and participating in it. Reasons could be to gain relevant work experience or the initiative solves a personal issue. Denters (2013) provides an example by describing people who participate to create a playground in their neighborhood. If they have children who will use this playground, they are both participant and benefiter.

Contacts

The second aspect is about the network of the participants. Some initiatives may have participants with a wide network of contacts within the municipality, others may lack such a network. These contacts remain vague because they depend on the context of each initiative. Denters (2016) describes how the Civic Voluntarism Model does not include contacts or 'social capital', but the CLEAR model does and the ACTIE model agrees with this addition.

For some initiatives the contacts with a small group of participants may be enough, while other initiatives may need to reach a wider audience and target the citizens of a community. Some initiatives need tight relationships with specific private organizations, for example; interest groups may need information about innovations from private organizations in the sector. Other groups use contacts within the municipality to reach their goals. To facilitate this aspect it is important to build a network for the initiative by providing and creating important contacts. Also, creating awareness and understanding of the aspect of contacts and the specific needs of an initiative may help.

Talents & Time

The aspect of 'Talents and Time' is about knowledge, skills and competences, but also about financial capital (income) and available time. In a further development of the ACTIE model Denters (2016) states that the Talents & Time aspect encompasses the most important parts of the Civic Voluntarism Model (1995). An example; the initiative may have participants with knowledge (Talents) of decreasing energy costs. Using this skill can help decrease the initiative's costs and decrease the need for funding. To enhance and support this providing information and advice is important. But also providing funding or comparable support (free use of facilities) is among possibilities in this aspect. Also making participation less time-consuming can help in facilitation.

Denters *et al* (2013) describe how most initiatives and civic servants feel that the knowledge, skills and competences of participants is rarely a bottleneck. However, available time seems to be a problem

more often. Another example is the increase of working hours to generate more revenue, this is only possible if there are enough volunteers that have enough time to spend on the initiative.

Besides the ACT components, the model includes two more components; Institutionalization and Empathy. These can be split into a different section of the model. These components revolve around the input of the municipality and the effect on initiatives.

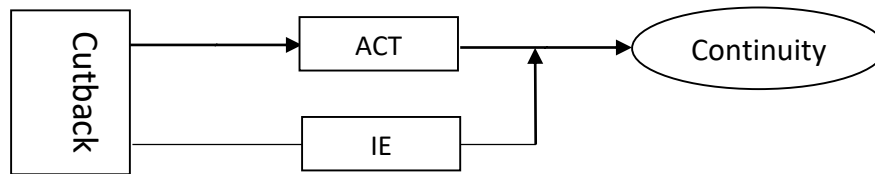


Figure 1: Research design based on ACTIE model

In relation to this thesis, ACT would be the conditions of the initiative and their strategy to counter cutbacks. Institutionalization and Empathy are the influence of the municipality on continuity.

Institutionalization

With Institutionalization the model looks at structural conditions for effective participation. This means there are formal procedures and structures that enhance the possibility of participation. With this aspect not only the formal procedures and structures are important, but also the securing of outcomes of participation and the extent in which people are allowed to participate.

Policies that support initiatives include ways to reduce obstacles or provide facilities or people. But also support in way of funding. These policies do not only help existing initiatives but also create possibilities for new initiatives to emerge (Denters, Bakker, Oude-Vrielink, & Boogers, 2013).

Funding is the most known way of support, but in light of cutbacks also the way of support that came under pressure and reason for this study. Denters (2016) also describes the providing of people as a way to support initiatives. This can consist of training civil servants to support initiatives or a civil servant with the specific task of providing support. Besides these forms of support the municipality is often able to provide support through facilities such as printing or allowing the use of empty spaces. Institutionalization is not only about support, but also the removal of obstacles. This can be done by reducing compartmentalization or policies to reduce formal procedures that hamper initiatives.

Finally Denters states that appreciation of initiatives helps to motivate participants and makes them feel recognized which helps to support the initiative. This appreciation is described in the form of prizes, media messages and visits by important members of the municipality (Denters, 2016).

Empathy

The final aspect is about how participants are treated by the municipality and its officials. This is different from the previous aspect, which looks at the formal policies or 'institutionalization'. Empathy is about the behavior and attitude of policy-makers, civic servants and politicians, about how much the initiative's concerns are heard and taken seriously. Municipalities that want to facilitate participation have to convince their citizens that their input is treated seriously. Politicians and officials need to be responsive and understanding. This can be stimulated by 'Institutionalization', but is more than that. It is about how well promises are kept, how much the participants are trusted and motivated within and outside the municipality's policies etc. According to Denters the most important problems are lack of flexibility, compartmentalization, the idea that the initiative is difficult and the professional thinking he delivers better work (Denters, 2016).

2.4.1 Institutionalization & Empathy in light of cutbacks

Institutionalization and Empathy can be related to the cutback strategy the municipality chooses. To have a better understanding of the cutback policy and attitude it is useful to summarize cutback theories and resource dependency. Decisions with the goal of reduced spending are called cutback management. Levine (1979) defines cutback management as:

‘Managing organizational change toward lower levels of resource consumption and organizational activity.’

A municipality can approach this lower resource consumption in different ways. Pollit and Bouckaert (2011) describe three types of cutback strategies; cheese slicing, efficiency gains and centralized priority setting. The choice in cutback strategy can make a difference in attitude from the municipality.

Approach	Summary
Cheese slicing	<i>Equally distributed cutbacks; less resistance but also less control on outcome and reform</i>
Efficiency gains	<i>Doing more with less; requires innovation, does not work on every organization</i>
Centralized priority setting	<i>Discussion about core services; cutback programs that are not priority</i>

Table 2: Cutback strategies Based on Pollit et al 2011:28

With ‘cheese slicing’ the municipality cuts back on every organization as fairly as possible and with ‘efficiency gains’ municipality believes the initiative can continue if they become more efficient. If the policy is the result of a centralized priority discussion, the municipality decided the initiative is no longer important enough to receive funding and continuity is no longer the municipality’s concern (Pollit & Bouckaert, 2011). These differences may affect empathy towards the initiative.

A trade-off with cutbacks is the ‘efficiency paradox’ described by Levine. Inefficient organizations can more easily deal with cutbacks by becoming more efficient and ‘borrow’ the practices that well performing organizations already implemented (Levine, 1979). This means that a seemingly fair tool such as the cheese-slicing may have devastating effects on organizations that are performing well.

The effects of a similar cutback can be very different depending on organization. Levine (1979) describes a trade-off between efficiency and equity; a dilemma of services for different populations:

‘The most dependent parts of our population-minorities, the poor, the handicapped, and the aged-are often the most costly to serve. Blind cost-cutting calculated on narrow productivity criteria could do grave harm to them (Levine 1979, p. 182)’

This aspect of dependency also affects the attitude of the municipality in a different way according to the ‘resource dependence theory’ (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1979). Pfeffer *et al* define dependence as:

‘In social systems and social interactions, interdependence exists whenever one actor does not entirely control all of the conditions necessary for the achievement of an action or for obtaining the outcome desired from the action (Pfeffer & Salancik, p. 40).’

Pfeffer and Salancik describe two forms of dependence; outcome interdependence and behavior interdependence. Outcome interdependence in sense of this thesis would mean interdependence of policy outcomes for the municipality and the performance of the initiative. For example; if the municipality wants a youth center for at least 20 young people a day, the outcome of that policy is directly related to the performance of the youth center. An example of behavior interdependence is about participation and not the results. In the previous example it is no longer about performance, but whether or not people participate to provide a youth center (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1979).

This dependency can give insights in the attitudes of municipalities when making cutback decisions. If the service is more important to the municipality it is less likely to be targeted, or the municipality it more likely to help the initiative find alternatives or support them in other ways.

2.5 framework conclusion

This study uses the ACTIE model as a framework. The ACTIE model has a slight advantage over the CLEAR model because, in general, CLEAR is a bit more narrow. CLEAR often looks at decision-makers and their influence on participation while ACTIE looks at participation through a broader scope. This is especially important because this thesis looks at cutbacks and the effects through the perspective of community initiatives. To understand this fully the theory should not only look at the behavior and effects of decision-makers, but mostly at choices and strategies of the initiatives.

Comparing CLEAR and ACTIE helps to understand differences. These theories are compared below. The CLEAR model is re-ordered to align with the ACTIE components to reveal similarities and differences:

ACTIE		CLEAR (ordered to align with ACTIE)		Comparison
A	<u>Aims & ambitions</u> : motives of participants. There is a reason they provide the services, Some participants may take the initiative because of a sense of duty, and others may do it for their community.	L	<u>Like to</u> : people participate because they want to be part of something. If participation is related to a certain group such as the elderly, other groups are less likely to participate.	<i>ACTIE describes motives for participation such as sense of community, but also duty or fulfilment. CLEAR is more narrow and only describes 'sense of community'.</i>
C	<u>Contacts</u> : aims at the network of the participants. Some initiatives may have participants with a wide network of contacts within the community, others may lack such a network.	E	<u>Enabled to</u> : Being part of a larger network with connections that are vital to successful participation. Helps take the right steps to create contact with the decision-makers.	<i>ACTIE describes forms of social capital; how is the initiative linked to other groups or its own participants. CLEAR is describing the routes into decision-making, which can be through other groups, but is more narrow because it only refers to decision-makers.</i>
T	<u>Talents & Time</u> : is about knowledge, skills and competences, but also about financial capital (income) and available time.	C	<u>Can do</u> : skills and resources such as information and money. Resources are commonly more found around people with a higher socio-economic status.	<i>Both theories are very similar. It is important to realize that many of these aspects are linked to 'socio economic status' of participants, but a low status does not necessarily exclude participation.</i>
I	<u>Institutionalization</u> : structural conditions for participation such as procedures that stimulate participation, secure outcomes of participation and the extent people are allowed to participate.	A	<u>Asked to</u> : Participation depends on whether or not people are asked and how they are asked. Different forms of participation fit different groups.	<i>ACTIE is narrow and describes 'institutionalization' as rules and procedures that enhance or hamper participation. CLEAR states in 'asked to' that people are likely to participate if they are asked by the decision-makers, but it also matters how they have to participate.</i>
E	<u>Empathy</u> : how participants are treated by the municipality and its officials. Will their concerns and initiatives be taken seriously? Responsiveness of politicians and civil servants is important	R	<u>Responded to</u> : participants have to believe that their participation makes a difference. Their input should be visible in the outcomes for them to stay motivated.	<i>Both theories are very similar, but ACTIE does not only look at outcomes and motivation from decision-makers, but also attitude towards participants in general. CLEAR is more focussed on the outcome-side of participation.</i>

Table 3: ACTIE and CLEAR compared

3. Research Design

The previous chapter explained the choice of the ACTIE model by Denters *et al* (2014). This chapter focuses on the practical aspects by describing the research design based on that model. By coding the results to fit within the ACTIE model conclusions about different factors can be given.

3.1 Research Design

The research design of this study is a comparative case study. The cases have been gathered among multiple municipalities. These municipalities have been selected on region and size to ensure similar municipalities. The municipalities were approached through existing contacts and a ‘snowball’ method to help find initiatives faster. Finding initiatives that endured cutbacks through documents turned out to be impossible because most cutback decisions were not publicly documented on the initiative level, but rather on themes such as ‘culture’ or social work’. Through semi-structured interviews, information was gathered. The interviews will lead to qualitative results that are presented in the next chapter.

3.1.1 Units & Setting

First a list of different facility initiatives per municipality was made. To find these community initiatives contacting the municipality was crucial because they have insight in all the initiatives that they cut funding from. The goal was to get names and lists of initiatives that were cutback. An example of such lists below (this list has not been used for the study):

Local village and neighborhood councils	Structural Cutbacks 2013	Youth	Structural Cutbacks 2013
Initiative A	€ 800,00	Initiative K	€ 780,00
Initiative B	€ 300,00	Initiative L	€ 700,00
Initiative C	€ 300,00	Elderly	
Initiative D	€ 225,00	Initiative M	€ 2.377,00
Initiative E	€ 150,00	Initiative O	€ 211,20
Initiative F	€ 225,00	Initiative P	€ 575,00
Initiative G	€ 150,00	Initiative Q	€ 204,40
Initiative H	€ 300,00	Initiative R	€ 1.207,40
Initiative I	€ 150,00	Initiative S	€ 418,60
Initiative J	€ 300,00	Initiative T	€ 388,00

Table 4: Example cutback list (anonimized)

Not all municipalities provided such detailed lists, but instead provided a few names of initiatives after explaining the study and the targeted initiatives. Some municipalities were unable to provide lists because they felt it consumed too much time and others argued that the subject was too politically sensitive. This consumed a few weeks because many contacts were unable to provide lists of these initiatives because they had to speak about it to their superiors first or municipalities had no centralized information to provide such a list.

The lists then were analyzed to find initiatives with substantial cutbacks that would lead to continuity problems. After this list was narrowed down, all the initiatives were approached. This was done through e-mail and where possible through phone. After getting in contact a date would be set for the interview. Every initiative has been attempted to reach at least four times (through mail or phone) at intervals of 5 working days. This ensured that every initiative had a chance to be included in the study, but also turned out to be very time consuming because many initiatives did not respond quickly, especially with e-mails.

3.1.2 Data & Variables: Interviews

Collecting the data through interviews is the next step. Using the ACTIE model, each community initiative is studied to understand their strategies. Every research unit will be asked to describe their starting point through the scope of ACTIE and then formulate their strategies, actions and the effects. Interviews have been done according to the following protocol:

During the interview:

- *The interview will be recorded to use for conversion to text.*
- *During the interview some notes will be made.*
- *The interview is structured along, but not limited to a pre-made list (appendix 1).*
- *The interviewed subject will be told about this protocol and asked to sign the provided ethics document and is informed of the related protocols of the Ethics Committee of BMS of the University of Twente (<https://www.utwente.nl/en/bms/research/ethics/#web-application>).*
- *The subject is informed they can stop at any time without providing a reason.*

After the interview:

- *The recordings are used to create a summary of around two A4 papers that will be used as data for this thesis together with the recordings.*
- *The data will be provided to the necessary people of the University to grade the thesis, but will not be provided externally and are treated as confidential.*
- *Data is used to describe findings in the thesis but the identities of initiatives are hidden.*
- *After grading the recordings will be deleted.*

Using semi-structured interviews helps to guide the interviews towards the different aspects of the ACTIE-model without narrowing the conversation by using a strict list of questions. The interviews were structured along the different ACTIE aspects to ensure the entire model is used during the interviews, but the questions can also be answered in a different order and some could be irrelevant with certain initiatives. The list of questions was designed to both describe the situation before cutbacks and the strategies after cutbacks, as well as follow the different aspects of the ACTIE model.

By finding initiatives from a few different municipalities it is possible to compare and reveal effects of different policies in the municipalities. This will help to study the Institutional and Empathy factors of ACTIE. Also asking about the municipality's attitude will formulate the IE part of the model.

3.1.3 Results and anonymity

After the interviews have been conducted a summary will be made in text. The interviews will also be recorded, but the recordings are only used for summarizing afterwards. The interviewed initiative will receive the summary and will be asked to confirm and allow the use of the text as data for this study. They will also be enabled to add or edit the text before use.

After confirmation, the summary is used as data in this thesis. For anonymity and generalization purposes these initiatives will be numbered and not named and their identity will be hidden by not providing more than necessary information about their goals and participants. This helps to create a setting where the initiatives feel they can speak freely about the municipality, especially because cutbacks is a sensitive subject and initiatives often still need a relationship with the municipality.

The results will be presented in the next chapter. This will be done by answering the different sub-questions. These answers will describe a story of the period the initiative dealt with cutbacks. After answering all the sub-questions a final section will describe the analysis with the ACTIE model.

3.2 Limits and side notes

This study is performed from the perspective of the initiatives. This helps to understand their strategies, their actions and feelings, but this study also describes the municipality's attitude (IE part) from their perspective. This may lead to one-sided perspectives, but because of the time component of this study it was impossible to interview municipality contacts for every initiative.

The study has been performed in the Netherlands. This means that some specifics for this country may not be generalizable for other countries. And the amount of initiatives interviewed is also low, so qualitative results may be very case specific.

This case specificity may be enhanced further due to the method of selection. The cases have been selected through specific municipalities through existing contacts. This may have created incomplete lists of initiatives. Also, contacting the municipalities and collecting lists of initiatives that dealt with cutbacks turned out to be more difficult than expected. This was partially because of difficulty finding a public servant that had an overview of all these cutbacks, but more importantly because of unwillingness because of political reasons. The decisions that were made were painful and most municipalities do not want to drag that back to the surface. One municipality replied to the request for such a list that it would be too time-consuming to compile it. Another municipality replied that creating such a list would involve dragging up painful decisions which the local aldermen would not do happily.

Most of these limits are the effect of two factors; time and possibilities. Due to the lack of time it was not possible to reach more initiatives or include the perspective of the municipality. Also, because municipalities were often unable to provide complete lists of cutbacks on specific community initiatives, the study was limited to the contacts through civil servants and their knowledge.

4. Research results

This chapter will describe the research findings from interviewing different community initiatives in the Netherlands. The results have been gathered over a period of three months in the spring of 2017. For every initiative the following sub-questions will be answered:

1. *What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?*
2. *What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?*
3. *What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?*
4. *What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?*

By doing this for every initiative, qualitative results will become visible. In the final chapter, the conclusion, the research question will be answered based on the results in this chapter, which will be summarized in a table with the results in the light of ACTIE.

Initiative I

For every initiative there is a story to tell. Each will begin with understanding their setting before cutbacks. What kind of participants and organization was the initiative comprised of? How were contacts with the municipality and other parties? Such questions describe the setting before cutbacks, which helps explain the strategy and the continuity questions.

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

Initiative I dates back to the late 1980's when it was created as an initiative with the aim of providing education about disabilities for primary schools. Not much later the initiative created a secondary organization that aimed at helping people with physical limitations. A few years later only the secondary organization would continue, but combined the activities of education and also became an information service for disabled people. In addition to those roles the initiative started providing solicited and unsolicited advice for the municipality on all matters related to disabled people within the community. Examples of such advice are their involvement with redevelopment of parking spaces within the municipality by advising on disabled parking spaces or their advice on rebuilding of a swimming pool and accessibility for disabled people. In short; the initiative was a service and information center for disabled people, educated children about disabilities and functioned as an advisory body for the municipality.

When looking at the initiative's participants there is a clear distinction between two groups. The board members are active members that have broad knowledge about rules, financing and organizing an organization, but also have disabilities or have experience of living with someone who is disabled in any way. The board members actively run the initiative by contacting the municipality, maintaining relationships with stakeholders and participants, organize meetings and develop advice for the municipality. These board members invest most time on the initiative compared to participants and the target-group. The board members had professional careers before their participation and often became disabled later in life which gave them opportunities to develop important skills and knowledge such as financing and maintaining important contacts and networks. They also have stronger 'socio economic status' than many of the initiative's participants.

The initiative describes all people with disabilities within the municipality as their target-group, although not all actively participate. The active participants are described by the board as 'professionals'. The board members meant to say that these participants are all disabled and can describe problems through their own experiences. This is also what the initiative uses these

'professionals' for; expertise on real-life experiences of people with disabilities. These participants are invited on meetings to speak, which gives the initiative input for their advice to the municipality. These participants have often been disabled their entire life and have not had the chance to make a career, study and therefore are mostly of a lower 'socio economic status' compared to the general population and the board members.

The initiative always had positive relations with the municipality and the municipality valued their (un)solicited advice. This motivated the initiative to develop these activities further by contacting universities to help with research on matters related to disabled people. Besides the contacts with the municipality and university, the initiative also worked together with a local business that sells support-goods for disabled people such as wheelchairs, stairlifts etc.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

Before cutbacks the initiative was funded for 30.000 Euros and had no other sources of income. This funding was used to rent a permanent location which was used as a service-point where disabled people could come and ask for information and support on problems they encountered, especially on the Social Support Act (Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning). This location was also used to work on advice for the municipality and organize meetings.

In the first round of cutbacks, funding was reduced to 19.000 euros. The initiative then decided to rent a smaller space at the same location which solved their financial deficit. In a second round of cutbacks the funding was reduced further to 3500 euros. This cutback was described as a 'deathblow' by the initiative's board members because a permanent location was no longer possible. Finally in a third round of cutbacks the last 3500 was reduced to zero. These final two cutbacks made the initiative feel unappreciated and they chose a very stern attitude towards the municipality.

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

In the first two cutbacks the initiative reduced and later cancelled housing. This led to a sharp reduction in costs for the initiative, but also created problems. The initiative no longer had a permanent place for disabled people to come to and ask for help, it no longer had a place for meetings and working was only possible from home. This meant that the initiative's effectiveness was also strongly reduced.

The board chose to re-evaluate the initiative's activities after the third round of cutbacks which reduced their funding to zero. The decision was made to slim down the initiative's on advising the municipality. This decision was two-sided because these activities were very costly and time consuming, but the board also used the decision as a statement to the municipality. The statement was meant to make the municipality feel the effects of its decision by reducing advice and input from the 'disabled community'. This was a choice that was a form of resistance instead of an adaptive strategy. This led to new conversations with the municipality about the future of the organization as an advisory body. The initiative made the municipality state 'black on white' that it would keep the advisory role. This statement gave the initiative the opportunity to speak about the costly and time-consuming side of such a role. The municipality then made funding available on incidental activity related projects. This result is not structural, but helps to restart such activities in the future, but it also reveals that the strategy was effective.

To keep organizing some of their activities the initiative needed housing for their gear they used to provide education. They contacted the local business that sells support-goods for disabled people which was already within their network. The business now provides storing space for free. This helped

reduce some costs as well as provide continuity for the education of the primary schoolchildren about disabilities by their initiative.

The initiative also describes how they started to rethink their methods on reaching their goals. Sometimes advising the municipality and reaching the alderman through costly studies and papers had little effect. And they decided that providing a better situation for their target-group was more important than the method. They found that calling the right public servant can sometimes help reach goals quicker. An example was the lowering of a curb next to a disabled parking. This was a problem they mentioned to the alderman numerous times, but never got solved, until they spoke to a public servant that coordinates the maintenance of the public space. The public servant sent a paver and the curb got lowered. The board members conclude that this may not be the proper way, but they care more about results for the disabled community in their municipality and they will try to approach problems this way.

Also the initiative got feedback from primary schools that their form of education was outdated and could be done through the use of computers. This would help to cut costs. To do this, the initiative decided to train their volunteers, enabling them to provide these lessons in a new way. The initiative did this by partnering up with a university to provide training for these volunteers. This decision helps to ensure continuity of education even further by lowering costs more.

When looking at possible ways to keep providing its services the initiative concluded it was not reasonable to expect any financial input from the participants because most have a lower 'socio economic status'. However, two members of the board decided to fund 1500 Euros together for the initiative, which helps to cover minimal costs needed to continue their activities. This private funding helps them rent locations to meet with their members. This solution can be seen as '*talents*' because of the use of financial capital of the participants although it is very minimal because of the socio economic status of the participants, meaning only the board members can fund the initiative.

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

The first cutback from 30.000 to 19.000 led to little problems as the initiative only had to rent a smaller location. During the second cutback from 19.000 to 3500 euros, the initiative felt the decision seemed to be made without any room to talk. When trying to make their case on the effects of such cutbacks it became obvious there was no other possible outcome for the alderman. The alderman was described as determined in the decision that was made and created little opportunity for the initiative to find alternatives or supported them in this transition. Also through contact with the city council there was little understanding and support for their initiative. This made the initiative feel unappreciated and demotivated.

The final cutback from 3500 to zero was only announced in a letter. This led to the initiative feeling unheard and unvalued even more. They decided to confront the municipality about this cutback policy and the effects on their organization as it would no longer be able to fulfill its advisory role for them. The third cutback was made by a new alderman (after elections), but the new alderman turned out to be more open for conversation. It was not possible to roll back the cuts, but he would try to support them in other ways. Examples were copying and printing services of the municipality made available to the initiative. Also, the alderman helped to make incidental activity funding available in the future after conversations in which the initiative discussed they would stop their advisory activities.

Concluding this story can be done by describing whether or not the initiative still exists. This outcome is the result of the setting, strategy of the initiative and also the attitude and decisions of the municipality.

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

The initiative managed to continue its activities. It did this by reducing its advisory activities, both as a statement towards the municipality and as a way to cut costs. The initiative also cut costs by redeveloping their education program to be less costly and by cancelling their accommodation and working from home. Finally, two members of the board decided to fund the initiative themselves for 1500 euros total and they use this for renting meeting locations a few times a year.

ACTIE components

In light of the ACTIE model the initiative used a few aspects: their aims & ambitions were re-evaluated which led to cancelling advisory activities both to reduce costs and show their resistance to the municipality. They also decided that reaching goals was more important than formal advisory routes. They used their existing contacts to find free storage space for gear they use to educate on primary schools, which reduced their costs and helped preserve the activity. They also developed new talents among volunteers to modernize their education method and reduce costs. Also, two board members used their own 'talents' by supporting the initiative with their own funds.

The initiative describes the institutional and empathy components as a municipality and alderman that were unsupportive. The alderman seemed stern and the decision had one possible outcome without alternatives or support. This changed a little after elections with a new alderman who still had to cut back on the initiative, but was open for conversation and actively offered support in the form of services and facilities as well as incidental funding for advisory activities.

Initiative II

The second initiative is very different from the first which led to interesting different outcomes and strategies. Answering the first sub-question is a starting point for this initiative's story:

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

Before 2009 there was an independent initiative to provide support for vulnerable women from all backgrounds. This initiative struggled with financing and dependency on volunteers on multiple occasions and finally decided to discontinue its activities in 2005. Later, because of demand from the municipality and community a new initiative emerged under an umbrella organization providing all sorts of care in 2009. In the new form since 2009, this initiative's provided a meeting location and organized activities to support vulnerable women from any background to help them become more self-reliant. The way they planned on doing that was by recruiting 'inspirational women' such as local business owners or women in high positions to volunteer for the initiative. By having inspirational women as examples and supporters for these vulnerable women the initiative hoped to help these vulnerable women develop themselves. Vulnerable women refers to many different things such as a language barrier, mental issues or women that came from abusive relationships.

The participants and volunteers were a group of around 60 women, both vulnerable and inspirational women, although the largest part consisted of vulnerable women. The inspirational women were recruited to provide support and function as examples for the vulnerable group and spent a margin of their time on the initiative. These inspirational women had careers, important experience and valuable networks within the community. The vulnerable women participated and volunteered for the initiative

as well, but often did not have a strong network and valuable skills, but were able to spend more time with the initiative. The vulnerable women were also described as of lower socio economic status.

Besides both volunteer groups, there was professional input for 1.2 FTE from the umbrella organization. These professionals were responsible for organization and recruiting of inspirational volunteers as well as supporting the vulnerable women. These professionals had a background in social work.

The initiative received many positive reactions from its participants as well as the municipality and community. However, because the initiative was part of a larger organization most of the official contacts went through the board of the umbrella organization. The professionals of the initiative rarely spoke to municipality contacts directly. The initiative did develop its own contacts with the community and especially through their 'inspirational women' they developed a valuable network.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

Because the initiative was supported professionally, the budget was much larger than some of the other initiatives in this study. In 2011 the initiative received funding for just over 190.000 Euros, but also got the message that funding would be cancelled in 2012. The funding was used to provide a meeting location for the participants as well as a working location for professionals. Besides that, the funding was used to pay professionals for a total of 1.2 FTE but also overhead costs such as administration for the umbrella organization.

The initiative did not have any income such as entrance money or membership fees. It did cover the costs of some activities for by asking participation fees. Examples are a cooking activity where the entrance fee would cover the costs for ingredients. The initiative felt this approach was reasonable considering their target-group of vulnerable women who often had little to spend due to their socio economic status.

Total cancellation of funding meant that the location, professionals and all activities would have to be stopped. At that time the initiative had no other income except for some cost-covering participation fees for workshops and courses. The initiative did not decide to stop its activities, they developed a strategy and hoped for continuation.

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

Once the cutbacks were announced the initiative mobilized its participants and tried to show how important the initiative was to them. They tried reaching both council members and aldermen and organized different activities to attract attention to their cause. Because the initiative was part of a larger organization, previously most of the contacts were not directly with the municipality. This created problems because they did not have the necessary contacts when starting with this approach and had to generate a lot of attention through media coverage. The goal was both to create attention and stop the cutbacks and resist the cutback decision.

The mobilization helped to generate attention and political awareness. During conversations that followed, the municipality provided more clarity about its decision. The new policy was to no longer fund on the basis of specific target groups. But the municipality was willing to provide partial funding for a few more years. The reduced funding was to provide the building for 15.000 euros a year. The initiative and the umbrella organization decided to research the offer of less funding to see if it was possible to keep providing the service.

After researching the municipality's offer, the umbrella organization concluded that providing a service for the promised reduced funding would lead to strongly reduced results. They believed it would not be possible for them to keep providing the service within the expectations of the municipality and their own organization. This was also due to the new vision the municipality provided on the initiative. This vision will be further explained when answering the next sub-question.

The initiative also looked into generating revenue through activities. However, their participants were mostly from a lower 'socio economic status' so asking for higher fees was not realistic. Secondly the initiative looked into generating revenue by producing products and services such as catering. However, this turned out to be too complicated because of planning and rules related to these activities, which the participants could not organize themselves.

The inspirational women often had more relevant skills and experience that could help to cover the FTE's if they were cancelled. But the time investment the inspirational women would have to make, to make a difference was not possible for them. They argued that they also had their own careers and lives to consider and organizing the initiative would involve more than the time-investment they were willing and able to do.

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

At first, the municipality decided to cut back funding in a single decision from 100% to zero. After mobilizing the initiative's participants and reaching both the City council members and the Aldermen it turned out there was some support for the initiative. However, the municipality believed that the initiative should be organized differently; in a more self-sustaining way on voluntary basis. Therefore the municipality was not willing to fund professionals for this type of initiative anymore.

The municipality offered reduced funding with the suggestion that many of the participants/volunteers, especially the inspirational women, should possess important skills to continue the initiative on their own. The umbrella organization concluded that this may be true, but would require an amount of time investment by these volunteers that they were not willing or able to do. Therefore without the input of professionals the initiative would not be able to continue. This leads to the final question:

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

Much to the regret of the former employees, participants and volunteers the initiative was discontinued. This was the result of the initiative having no direct communications with the municipality, as well as a very strong reduction in funding. The cutbacks reduced income completely except for housing costs. The umbrella organization then decided that there was no possibility of providing the service anymore.

The new policy of the municipality as well as the point of view of the umbrella organization led to the initiative being discontinued. The professionals of the initiative also state that they still wonder if a less definitive point of view from the umbrella organization would have led to a different outcome; some form of continuity.

Outside the scope of the former initiative but with the promised reduced funding a new initiative emerged. This initiative was organized by a neighborhood center and provides language and participation sessions on a smaller scale. The municipality concluded that this new initiative provides a reasonable alternative considering the cutbacks and expectations of a volunteer organization in comparison to a professional care organization.

ACTIE components

When looking at the components provided by ACTIE there are a few things to be described. The initiative attempted to reach the municipality and community to oppose and resist the cutback decision in line with contacts. This attempt was surprising because the initiative had no existing contacts before. The strategy had some effect because the initiative managed to reach media and politicians and this led to lower cutback; the housing remained.

Besides the use of contacts the initiative looked into development of new activities and talents to generate revenue. The initiative decided this was unrealistic because of the amount of time this would consume or how much voluntary input was expected for this to be effective.

Looking at the IE components of the ACTIE model, the municipality was very clear with its cutback decision. The municipality created a policy to no longer fund based on target-groups which meant the initiative did no longer receive funding. After protests the municipality decided it could still provide housing for a few years, but they expected the initiative to change and become based on volunteers and not professionals.

Finally the initiative and the umbrella organization researched the option to continue with funding for housing only but concluded this would not fit within their 'aims and ambitions' as a welfare organization. But a different initiative has emerged which was created by part of the participants of this initiative and is more similar

Initiative III

The third initiative is again different in nature and size than the first two which creates a different story and outcome. It was less professional than both previous initiatives, but had a larger group of participants:

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

This initiative exists since the mid 1980's and focuses on a specific sub-culture of music and lifestyle. Under the term youth center it was providing a meeting location as well as organizing educational and recreational activities. The initiative want to provide a safe and creative learning environment for young people.

The initiative has roots in punk-culture and many of its participants also feel related to one of the many sub-cultures within that group. These roots mean that the participants are often '*activists*' on many subjects and many participate in demonstrations against discrimination or current policies on environment etc. Many of the participants and volunteers feel distant from policy-makers, government and the municipality. In total there are around 30 active volunteers, a larger group of supporters and regular participants and a countless group of people who take part in the activities of the youth center. Between board members and volunteers there was no clear distinction, although the board members were mostly older than the target-audience and often had been active for many years. The board members carried their experience, but also their political opinions about the municipality with them.

Throughout the initiative's history the feeling of independency also became part of the organization because board members and volunteers felt that they owed no accountability to the municipality. This led to little communication between municipality and the initiative for many years without many direct negative effects for both. The initiative kept receiving funding and kept organizing their activities and the municipality provided little incentive to change or improve their relationship. The initiative was structurally funded during that time. Cutbacks changed this structural funding.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

Before cutbacks the youth center used to have around 35.000 Euros of funding each year. This funding was used mainly to rent housing and cover costs of electricity, gas and water. If any of that funding remained it would be used to fund activities such as live music, maintenance and the purchase of new gear such as audio equipment and lights.

The initiative was able to generate revenue through bar sales and entrance fees. This income was very minimal because the initiative wanted to remain as approachable as possible and also was against running the organization like a business. They believed their goal was not to make money, but to provide a facility for young people which fits within the culture of their participants and volunteers. The revenue they managed to generate was directly put back into organizing activities and maintaining the initiative.

The initiative was cut back in multiple rounds. The first cutback was 5000 Euros, bringing funding down to 30.000 Euros a year. This cutback meant that the initiative had to cover some of the electricity, gas and water costs with money they generated themselves. In the second round of cutbacks the funding was reduced to 25.000 Euros a year. This meant that the initiative had to fund all other costs besides housing through their own income. At that time this was impossible and would lead to the initiative being unable to continue. In a final round, in later years, the city council selected the initiative for another, much larger cutback of 25.000 which would reduce funding to zero. This last cutback was cancelled, but only through the strategy of the initiative.

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

During the first cutbacks the initiative was involved in the decision and accepted that it had to lose some of its funding because many organizations were cutback at that time. To counter this the initiative decided to generate more revenue and was reforming its organization. It started to more actively manage the bar, purchase its stock more strategically and reduce activities where revenue was negative because of high costs or very low income. By reducing some of the costly activities and letting go of the idea that their organization should not be ran like a business, but also participants being able to reform the organization this way and generating revenue from the participants helped to counter the effects of the first cutback. This did not only help cover the actual costs the initiative had after cutbacks, but also created a more positive attitude from the municipality because the initiative was willing to change. It was this attitude change that helped to build a stronger relationship with their contact within the municipality over a longer period of time.

After the second cutback the initiative was no longer involved in the decision and did not agree with it so they decided to resist the decision. This led to demonstrations at the city council meetings, but in the end had no effect on the outcome. Eventually the initiative had to continue its efforts to reform its organization and generate more revenue. The initiative was able to reform enough to continue. But the reactions from the city council as well as the way the second cutback was decided made the initiative realize they needed to have a better relationship with the municipality. They felt this could help them prevent future cutbacks and also anticipate incoming decisions earlier.

The participants decided from a bottom-up movement to replace some of their key volunteers and board members with new, more able people that also were more willing to reform. These new board members and volunteers replaced older volunteers that were unwilling or unable to change their view and behavior towards the municipality. This led to a new spokesperson as well as volunteers that worked on their image towards the municipality and community. They did this by creating flyers and folders about their activities, and goals. This helped to create a better understanding within the community and municipality for the initiative. Also, by choosing a new spokesperson the old mentality

of 'independence' was cutoff and this helped to reset the tone of conversation with the alderman and public servants. By choosing the right person for the job and consciously creating a better network and valuable contacts, relations with the municipality improved. This strategy did not help to cover any of the cutbacks, but would prove to be an important step later.

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

The initiative was part of different rounds of cutbacks over the years. The first round was a cutback where they were involved with the decision-making. Here the municipality explained that cutbacks were coming and every funded organization had to reduce some of its funding. This led to the initiative deciding it could deal with a cutback of 5000 Euros. These talks were hosted in small groups by the alderman and involved a few similar initiatives. This approach was also possible because there was financial slack for the organizations as well as no immediate need for large cutbacks.

After this first round of cutbacks talks between the municipality and a few similar initiatives remained. The municipality suggested that these initiatives could merge to reduce costs, but the initiatives opposed this idea because they felt their groups and goals were very different and all should exist.

The second cutback was communicated through a letter where the decision was already made. The letter communicated the decision and offered the initiative the option to speak to the city council. The initiative used this option, but the initiative felt the decision was already made and their speech had no effect on the outcome. They also believe that the municipality only wanted to achieve a merger between the similar initiatives and was not open to another solution and therefore cutbacks were delivered on their initiative.

During the third cutback, the initiative was informed before the decision was made, but at the time was only part of a proposal. This final cutback would reduce funding to zero and that would mean the end of the initiative. However, the initiative had been working on its relationship and its image. This helped to create a better understanding for their cause and also more resistance against the cutback proposal within the city council. Besides this, the initiative also mobilized its participants and volunteers, using their experience in demonstrations, to show how much support there was for their initiative within the community as well as show their resistance against the proposal. Eventually within the second round of decision-making the city council cancelled the proposal to cut back on the initiative. Eventually this final round would have meant the initiative had to stop because the cutback of 25.000 Euros was too large to overcome.

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

The initiative managed to continue after cutbacks by reforming its organization to perform more like a business. This helped to generate the necessary revenue as well as improve their image towards to municipality. They also focused on this improving of their image because contacts with the municipality were often negative and based on old values. The initiative managed to improve this and during the final round of cutbacks, the municipality selected the initiative for another cutback that would mean the end of the initiative. However, because the initiative had been working on its relationship and its image there was a better understanding for their cause and also more resistance against the cutback proposal within the city council. Besides this, the initiative also mobilized its participants and volunteers again, using their experience in demonstrations, to show how much support there was for their initiative within the community. Eventually within the second round of decision-making the city council cancelled the proposal to cut back on the initiative. Making it possible to continue.

ACTIE components

When comparing the actions of the initiative with the ACTIE model there are some clear strategies. First the initiative reformed its aims and ambitions from a bottom-up movement among participants and volunteers. This helped to create a culture where contacts with the municipality could grow and create more understanding. This reform also helped to generate revenue through its participants. All this was done by also replacing key volunteers and board members with new people with relevant talents.

In de beginning the contacts with the municipality were negative and near non-existent. The initiative received funding and did this by minimal accountability towards the municipality. It was this relationship that made it difficult to anticipate cutbacks and explain the negative effects it would have. This also led to very little empathy from the municipality as well as a cutback policy that left little room to talk and find alternatives.

When the initiative improved their image and relationship this helped to create understanding and support within the municipality. It was this improvement that helped to cancel the third proposal to cut al funding. If this decision was made the initiative would have stopped.

Initiative IV

This organization is a museum to educate and enthuse people for a specific economic sector. It is supported by many companies within that sector as well as the municipality. This organization is much larger than the other initiatives in this paper in both financial terms as well as participants and volunteers.

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

The initiative dates back to the early 1980's and was a small initiative back then, organized by enthusiasts and local companies that were working in the sector. The initiative grew over the years and became a well-known museum in the municipality and the Netherlands. The museum reports over 30.000 visitors a year. The museum wants to preserve, educate and enthuse people about the subject.

The museum has a board, management and some staff which totals 6.5FTE. Besides the paid group, there is a large group of over 150 volunteers. The paid staff is responsible for running the organization, contacts with municipality and sponsors, financing, legal aspects etc. They were hired because they have the necessary skills to run the museum and because they have paid working hours they can spend most time on the initiative as individuals.

Besides the professionals the initiative has over 150 volunteers. They perform all sorts of roles within the organization such as maintenance of the building and knowledge of the various exhibits. Many of the volunteers have been with the organization for more than 20 years and are former employees of the various companies that support the museum. These employees often have worked with the items that are exhibited and often are able to tell a lot about them. These volunteers are also used as a think-tank for the museum and a critical exhibit commission. The volunteers spend a margin of their time on the museum, but because there are so many volunteers in total their time investment is very important for the continuity.

The professional top of the organization had very regular and positive relations with companies that work in the sector. These companies sponsor the museum with funding as well as pieces for exhibit. They hope the museum will enthuse future generations to work for them.

Besides the business sector the museum has regular contact with the municipality as well as a few other initiatives in a combined meeting. It was these meetings that also helped them to be aware of

incoming cutbacks the municipality had to deliver on initiatives such as their own museum. It was this prior knowledge that helped the initiative to develop a strategy to anticipate such decisions before they were made and for that reason this story begins with their strategy instead of the cutbacks sub-question:

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

The initiative was aware of upcoming cutbacks on community initiatives due to large cutbacks from the national government on the municipalities. This was also discussed in regular meetings with the initiative, municipality and a few other initiatives. This awareness helped the initiative to anticipate and develop a strategy. The initiative decided that it should merge with another initiative both for efficiency gains as well as to become a broader, stronger organization, creating more value for the municipality and community.

The initiative the museum wanted to merge with was an initiative that focuses on creativity such as drama courses, craftsmanship and exhibits. They already had developed contacts with the initiative because they were part of the regular meetings with the municipality. Together they decided that merging would be logical because their goals and subjects could reinforce each other and creativity was also a valued talent in the business sector the museum was about.

Once the two initiatives agreed on the merger they proposed it to the municipality. The municipality was also positive about the idea, especially because the two initiatives stated that this merger would create efficiency gains in a few years, which helped the municipality to reach its cutback goals.

The next step for the initiative was to estimate these efficiency gains and propose to wait with cutbacks until these gains were reached. The municipality agreed on the offer and decided there would be no other cutbacks on the initiatives until they had enough time to fully complete the merger and needed less funding. This created the possibility for the initiative to work on the merger which was completed in 2015 and not be cutback in any of the cutback rounds until that time.

For the initiative there were some unexpected side effects for the merger. The museum also had to create new activities because it merged with an initiative focused on creativity such as theatre and art. This change was possible because creativity was also valued by its stakeholders that want creative professionals to work for them. However, some of the volunteers started to feel unheard and did not understand the decision, which led to some dissatisfaction. However, the municipality also decided to change some of its expectations from the merger which is important to describe before the impact of the cutbacks:

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

In a later stage of the negotiations the municipality communicated that there was another initiative that needed a new place due to cutbacks. This third organization was focused on the music sector. The way the municipality included this initiative in their meetings about the coming merger made the initiatives feel it was more than a question. They felt that if they would not include the third initiative their funding would become open for discussion. This meant that the initiatives decided to include the third initiative in the merger, which helped to municipality to cut back on that organization.

This third organization focused on music, which the initiative felt did not fit the first two initiatives as well and this led to some unexpected effects. The sponsors and participants of the museum started to feel unheard. The sponsors openly questioned the decision and also argued that their funding might

not be possible anymore in the future because the new organization after mergers was too far from their values. Sponsors understood that creativity in their future employees would be useful, but they did not see such gains with adding music.

The volunteers had similar feelings to creativity, although their objections were only minor back then. Adding music to the museum made these objections worse and more of the volunteers that often were active for decades in the museum started to question the decision or feel less welcome doing their volunteering.

Besides effects on the sponsors and volunteers, the merger with the third organization created another problem. The organization had professionals working for them that had to be included in the merger. This was very costly because the professionals had to renegotiate their contracts with the new merged organization. Eventually all the cutbacks were indirect because the initiative was allowed time to complete the merger and reach efficiency gains, which would lead to less necessary funding.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

During the first talks about incoming cutbacks the initiative's income was 39% funding and 61% sponsoring and generated revenue. By merging with the second initiative it was estimated that the initiative would be able to cut funding for both initiatives due to efficiency gains. This would lead to a cutback for the municipality because less funding was needed.

In 2015 the merged initiative got funded for a little over 800.000 Euros and generated revenue for just under 800.000 Euros. The initiative had to cover costs of which over 900.000 Euros was spent on staff, around 250.000 was spent on housing and a 100.000 on activities. The remainder was used for things like maintenance and marketing.

By adding the third initiative focused on music activities the municipality would be able to cutback a total of around 200.000 Euros. This cutback would be completed around 2020.

In total the initiative expected there would be little financial effects due to the cutbacks because they were delivered through efficiency gains they proposed. This was also possible because the municipality agreed and allowed the initiative to merge and provided necessary time to make these changes.

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

This organization managed to pro-actively prevent cutbacks by merging with another initiative. Combining this with strong communication towards the municipality meant they did not get targeted for additional cutbacks and were allowed more time to implement the changes and create efficiency gains (lower costs for housing and back-office) by merging.

In the end there were no direct cutbacks on the initiative because of the anticipation and early merger. The cutbacks were delivered by later efficiency gains which meant the initiative needed less funding as well as a cutback delivered to the third initiative which was also based on reduced housing costs and efficiency gains. But these mergers created unexpected effects on the stakeholders and participants.

ACTIE components

In terms of ACTIE this initiative is more difficult to compare to the other initiatives in this study. This is both due to its size and professionalism, but also because direct cutback decisions were never made. The initiative used its regular contacts and positive relationship with the municipality to have prior knowledge on incoming cutbacks. They also used their contacts with other initiatives to anticipate these cutbacks by proposing a merger, creating efficiency gains and indirect lowering of funding for

the municipality. This was possible because of capable professionals possessing necessary talents to both be able to organize such contacts, understand the incoming cutbacks and being able to start a merger in anticipation of these cutbacks.

The initiative then had to change its aims and ambitions to fit the new organization, which led to friction between their new organization and the old aims and ambitions of the participants/volunteers as well as supporters from the business sector.

From the perspective of the IE component the municipality was very supportive of the idea of a merger to cut costs because this helped them to reach their cutback goals without making hard choices. At the same time the municipality did not add any further cutbacks except the proposal of the two initiatives. The municipality however, added a third initiative to the mix and created non-financial problems for the museum but provided little support or understanding for these problems.

Initiative V

The fifth initiative was an organizer of cultural activities in a local church as well as a fund for these activities. It is located in a smaller municipality than the other initiatives in this paper, but dealt with similar cutbacks.

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

Around 1995 there was no theatre in the town and this led to discussions because there was demand for cultural activities. This created multiple initiatives that wanted to create a theatre or support cultural activities. One of these initiatives started in one of the town's churches. The church wanted to open its doors for cultural activities to become more accessible and open to new visitors. To do this the church decided to create a separate organization to start organizing cultural activities. The reason this organization was separate was to make it unrelated to religion by actively finding board members outside the church as well as within. This was also necessary for funding, because the municipality did not want to fund religious activities, but it did fund cultural activities.

The organization focuses on organizing and funding cultural activities in the church they are related to. They describe this as 'making contributions and / or provide financial support for the promotion and / or implementation of cultural activities'.

The organization consists of a board only, but they are all unpaid volunteers. The board members all have a strong network in the cultural community such as with choirs and other cultural clubs that might want to perform or need funding. Besides these contacts the board members are all selected on the basis of their capabilities; the chairman has valuable contacts with the municipality and experience of running a cultural organization, the treasurer is very capable of making long-term financial plans and assessments.

Besides the necessary talents, the board describes that one of their most important abilities is to be able to work on a basis of trust. This helped them a lot when acquiring financing from municipality and other cultural funds because on the basis of experience over many years these organizations know and trust the initiative. This helped to get the necessary funding without having to account for it too much, reducing the amount of time needed to spend on the initiative.

The initiative was always linked to a local church, although they are not part of the church's organization. Not all the members of the board were members of the church because they felt it should be about cultural activities and not religious. Besides the church, the initiative had a positive relationship with the municipality because the initiative was used to organize a few important activities each year, such as the liberation festival.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

The initiative was part of conversations with different initiatives about incoming cutbacks. In 2013 the funding was around 5500 Euros structurally. At first, the plan was to cutback all funding immediately, but this was later changed. In 2014 the funding was reduced to around 4000 Euros. In 2014 this was cut back to 2000 Euros and in 2015 this was reduced to zero.

The initiative used its funding to provide cultural groups the opportunity to perform in the church. The way they did this was by organizing and approaching such groups and setting up activities. These groups then had to pay a fee to the initiative. The initiative then had to pay the church, but this fee was higher than what the cultural activity had to pay, the rest was paid by the initiative and sometimes the initiative covered all the costs. In some cases the activities would generate revenue. In 2014 the initiative generated over 8000 Euros. This extra income was used to fund other cultural activities.

Besides funding activities the initiative used the money to perform maintenance and invest in the church's facilities, enabling the location to be better fit for their cultural activities. Examples of these investments are music installations such as speakers and a grand piano.

When the initiative was cut back from all funding this meant the initiative would not be able to continue endlessly, but the initiative had been building reserves. These reserves were around 15.000 euros and gave the initiative room to develop a new strategy and allowed the initiative to continue for a few more years before running out of finances.

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

At first the initiative calculated it had enough reserves to continue for a few years without much need for funding. The initiative started looking into other cultural funds, trying to find a way to generate new income. Besides cultural funds the municipality provided a new type of funding; project-funding which is incidental funding for a specific activity.

Besides funding, the initiative looked into sponsoring. The idea was to approach organizations to sponsor cultural activities in the town. This turned out to be a bit more difficult because these organizations expect something in return; advertising, free tickets etc.

Due to decreasing income of the church, discussions with the church developed and the church decided it wanted to organize the activities themselves. This forced the initiative to split off its 'organizing' part to the church. The initiative did not want to split this part off, but felt it had no choice. This made working with sponsors a lot more difficult if not impossible, because the initiative would no longer be able to directly influence free tickets, the name of the activities or placing of advertisements.

The initiative decided it would transform into a cultural fund that would no longer actively organize, but only fund activities. The church hoped it would also receive (part of) the funding that was formerly the initiative's, but instead the initiative remained as a cultural fund. This decision made their organization without financial risk because they have no costs for rent or labor. If their money runs out they can simply stop the initiative, but for now this does not seem necessary.

Right now the church seems to be incapable of organizing the activities as well as the initiative used to. In the future the initiative does not exclude the option to fund cultural activities in other churches or locations because when they generate new revenue they feel it is no longer linked to the church. But all the money they currently have left to fund activities with is officially linked to that church and so they will fund activities in that church only.

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

The initiative always had a fruitful relationship with the municipality. But when cutbacks were unavoidable it was not possible to convince the municipality otherwise. The municipality did value the initiative, but it was no longer possible to fund it on a structural basis. The initiative also states that they noticed that the decision was already made and very little could be changed. The initiative did protest that cutting back all funding to zero would be irresponsible. The municipality agreed with the protests and decided to cut back in multiple stages.

The municipality did offer funding on specific activities which the initiative is going to use in the future. The municipality also wants the initiative to continue because it organizes some important events each year such as a liberation festival. This type of funding can help the initiative to continue, but the initiative also states that this type of funding cannot be used to generate reserves and organize activities on a structural basis.

The initiative also states that the immediate effects of the cutbacks on their organization did not have strong effects. However, because the municipality also cut back on cultural organizations such as choirs, the number of activities has shrunk. This is due to the fact that these organizations are unable to perform their activities as often with the reduced funding, independent of the funding this initiative could provide. The initiative still exists, but some things changed:

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

After cutbacks the initiative was able to continue for a few years. This was due to the strategy of creating a reserve. Together with the reserve and possibility of project-funding and the use of other cultural funds the initiative is optimistic about their future.

After the cutbacks the initiative was forced to become a cultural fund and no longer actively organize activities. This turned the initiative into an organization without financial risk, because when their finances run out they can stop without remaining costs such as housing. The splitting of the organization did have a downside; the initiative no longer organizes their own activities which led to less activities and also removed their ability to generate extra revenue.

ACTIE components

The initiative got forced to split organizing activities and funding them. This turned the initiative into a cultural fund that has no financial risk. This is a clear change of aims and ambitions of the initiative, but this change was not part of their strategy.

Through the use of talents the initiative developed their strategy. The board members were very able to anticipate incoming cutbacks and used this to change their spending and start to spread their funds over a longer period of time. The initiative can now continue for a few years by spending strategically which changed the aims and ambitions of the initiative a little.

To generate new income the initiative is looking at larger cultural funds for their activities as well as incidental activity related funding from the municipality. The initiative feels this strategy will help them to continue in the future although these kind of funds do not allow them to gain structural income or create savings. This can be typed as a use of (new) contacts.

The cutbacks were delivered in multiple rounds, but at first the municipality wanted to deliver it in a single cutback decision. The initiative managed to change this by contacting the municipality and open

conversations about the effects of such decisions. The municipality was supportive about the initiative, but decided to no longer do any structural funding for activities.

Initiative VI

The sixth initiative was an organization that provides activities and a meeting facility for people of 55 years and older. The initiative has the largest group of regular participants, although the museum in initiative IV has more visitors.

What were the setting and activities of the initiative before cutbacks?

In the early 1980's the initiative was started as a response to some seniors (55+) losing their jobs as well as having more time on their hands. The idea was that there was a whole 'third age' in these people's lives that could be filled in. The initiative organizes activities and provides a meeting location for 55+ years of age participants. With the funding it hires the location as well as some services such as a janitor.

Participants take part in groups that fit their interests such as a group that bridges or groups that do different creative activities, sports or work with computers. The initiative has active participants and members. The total membership is around 2000 people. Besides membership active participants join the different activities on a regular basis. These participants are split into different groups according to their interests.

Besides the participants the initiative has a board. These board members are the active volunteers that organize the initiative. These board members have been selected on the basis of their roles and relevant 'talents'. The initiative describes these board members as very capable and indispensable in the challenges they faced. The initiative was faced with the challenge of cutbacks in 2014.

What was the initiative's financial situation and what was the impact of the cutbacks?

Before 2014 the initiative got funded for 35.000 euros, in 2015 this was reduced to two-third and in 2016 this was reduced to zero. This would mean that, without change, the initiative could not continue its facility and activities.

Besides the funding from the municipality the initiative generated a large amount of revenue. It did this by membership fees of 12 euros a year, participation fees for courses and activities and entrance fees for every activity. In total the initiative generated just over 70.000 euros. Because of the cutbacks the initiative had to change its strategy.

What strategies did the initiative adopt to counter the cutbacks and what were the effects on the initiative's continuity?

When the cutbacks were announced the initiative had to assess their situation. They did this by using the 'talents' of the treasurer, who was very capable of giving insights in their financial situation and their options. This led to the initiative realizing they could generate more revenue to counter the effects of the cutbacks.

A deeper understanding of their supporters also helped them decide to only increase entrance fees and not membership fees. They realized that some 'sleeping members' might decide it became too expensive and quit. By keeping this fee the same their income would not decrease on that aspect. They did increase participation and entrance fees by a minor amount. This increase would help them become independent of funding by their treasurer's calculations.

Besides the skills of their treasurer their participants were very supportive, which was necessary for the change they wanted to make. The participants agreed that paying higher entrance fees was reasonable if it meant continuity. This is also a 'talents' aspect, which looks at how much the participants have to spend on the initiative.

The initiative also tried to stop the decision by making legal objections. They worked through the juridical procedure, but this had no effect. The way the decision was communicated created the most problems for the initiative, but this was no legal basis to nullify the decision by law.

What was the cutback policy and attitude from the municipality and how did it affect the initiative's continuity?

The relationship with the municipality was always positive and professional. However, strangely the municipality only contacted the initiative about the coming cutbacks a day before it would be announced publicly in newspapers. The initiative felt this was unfair and came as a shock to them as they had meetings before when no cutbacks were mentioned.

After the decision the initiative tried to contact the council members and aldermen, but felt there was little understanding for their case. They got suggestions such as 'find sponsors' which was not reasonable or 'rent a building from the municipality' which actually was more expensive. Also, they felt the decision was already made without any real options of communication about it.

Did the initiative continue after cutbacks?

After cutbacks the initiative managed to become independent by generating more income from its participants through entrance fees. They did this after a well calculated overview of their situation. The initiative is positive about its future as an independent organization that had no funding from the municipality. It believes this is a better option for the future.

The initiative feels that the municipality made mistakes in the communication to them, even if they managed to continue without funding. They feel that because of the unexpected decision and the way it was announced gave them little room to develop a strategy. This may have happened to organizations that were not able to continue because of this type of communication.

ACTIE components

This initiative managed to stay the same in sense of aims and ambitions. It did communicate its financial situation to their participants and used their existing contacts to develop and promote their strategy. They decided to generate more revenue through these participants, who supported them. By generating more revenue the initiative managed to continue without funding. This strategy was only viable because of the talents of board members who were able to calculate the necessary funds for the strategy to work and were able to give the right insights to create the strategy.

The cutbacks were delivered in multiple rounds, all announced in the same decision. The announcement however, was delivered by phone a day before public announcement. The initiative felt this was strange and unreasonable because it gave them little time to react and develop a strategy.

When trying to prevent the decision it was already too late. Council members were sympathetic, but only offered ideas for strategies such as a different location or different funds. All these options turned out to be unrealistic and the council members turned out to be uninformed.

4.3 Findings summary

Table 5: Summary of research findings

Initiative	Existence	Aims & Ambitions	Contacts	Talents & time	Institutionalization	Empathy
I	Still exists	Changed its activities to reduce costs	Used existing contacts to reduce costs	- Input of private funds - Developed talents to reduce costs	- Cutbacks in multiple rounds - No structural funding - Incidental funding as alternative	- No room to talk - No support or alternatives - After elections some support and incidental funding
II	No longer exists	- Refused to change - Was unable to change	- Created new contacts - Mobilized to resist	- Unable to use existing talents - Lack of time participants	- Cutback in a single decision - Policy to stop funding target-groups	Offered partial funding after mobilization
III	Still exists	- Changed views on municipality - Changed views on generating revenue	- Improved contacts with municipality - Improved image within community	- Replaced people with hampering views - Found the right people for the job - Generating revenue from participants	- Cutbacks were delivered in multiple rounds - Policy aimed at a merger to cut costs	- Little understanding and support - After improved contacts: better understanding and support which cancelled cutback proposal
IV	Still exists (has merged)	- Changed to fit with the merged three organizations - Change created friction with participants and volunteers - Change created friction with supporting businesses	- Existing positive contacts provided prior knowledge - Existing contacts created merging partnership - Existing positive relationship created support for merger	- Professionals were very capable of understanding incoming cutbacks - Professionals created positive relationship and support	- Initiative proposed merger before cutback decision - Municipality accepted proposal - Municipality added a third organization to merger	- Positive relations - Supportive and understanding for proposal - No understanding for problems created with the addition of third initiative
V	Still exists (has split)	- Got changed involuntarily - Spreading spending to continue longer	- New and existing contacts to find new funding	- Able to anticipate incoming cutbacks	- Policy was to stop structural funding - Cutback was delivered in multiple rounds	- changed the cutback from a single decision into multiple rounds.
VI	Still exists	- Remained similar	- Created support among participants	- Generated more revenue from participants	- The cutback was delivered in multiple rounds, announced in a single decision.	- Very late communication about cutback decision - Empathic communication, but no knowledge of useful information

5. Conclusions

When starting this thesis the goal was a practical one; preserving community initiatives in times of cutbacks. This goal seems simple, but is already two-sided because both the municipality and an initiative can influence the outcome. Community initiatives can adapt after cutbacks to ensure continuity and municipalities can look for ways to influence the continuity of community initiatives during cutbacks. The main research question was formulated as follows:

What strategies did facility-oriented community initiatives adopt after cutbacks and what were the effects of their strategies on the initiative's continuity?

This chapter will not discuss the sub-questions again because they were all explained and used in the previous chapter. The sub-questions were used as handles to describe the different cases and a basis for the ACTIE model to build upon. Instead, the conclusions will be described using ACTIE.

To answer the research question, six community initiatives from the Netherlands were studied. Using the ACTIE model, their starting situation as well as their strategy after cutbacks was analyzed.

Aims & Ambitions

When looking at the 'aims and ambitions' of the initiatives it seems most initiatives did not change their aims and ambitions as a strategy to counter the effects of the cutback decision. Most initiatives kept similar goals. That however, does not mean that aims and ambitions have no effect on continuity.

Initiative II was clearly affected by its aims and ambitions. The municipality changed its demand, asking for an initiative on a voluntary basis instead of professional. Initiative II's unwillingness to change resulted in discontinuation. When looking at this initiative in more detail it becomes clear this 'unwillingness' was the result of different groups involved; the professional organization that was unwilling/unable to change, the municipality demanded a different approach and the participants who wanted the service but were unable to make the change because of lack of support from the professional organization.

In the case of two initiatives, changes were made to aims and ambitions, but they were no direct strategy to counter cutbacks. Initiative IV changed to achieve a merger with two other organizations. This was not a response to cutbacks, but instead a strategy to anticipate and prevent possible future cutbacks. Initiative V changed from organizing events and funding them to an initiative that only provides funding. This was not a strategy to counter cutbacks, but was the result of conflicting views of their partner organization. This was not a strategy or the effect of cutbacks, but due to other factors.

Contacts

With 'contacts', three different strategies can be identified. First; finding new partners to reduce costs or find new sources of income. Second; mobilize participants to resist the decision. And third; increase initiative's image towards community and municipality to create goodwill (indirect resistance).

Using contacts to reduce costs or find new sources of income is a very direct strategy to counter the effects of a cutback decision by finding talents through partners. The strategy is about acceptance of the cutback decision and finding alternatives other than the municipality. This was done by initiative I that used contacts to find a free location to store their gear which reduced costs, which can be described as sponsoring. Initiative V uses contacts to find new funding and feels it will be a successful strategy in the future. This approach could also be aimed at other 'talents' besides money, for example by finding experts on reducing energy costs.

When looking at the second strategy, mobilizing participants, this is a form of resistance. The aim of this strategy is to stop the cutback decision or reverse it by influencing the municipality's decision-making. Mobilizing participants is done to show there is demand for the initiative. This approach seems most effective when the community supports the initiative, which leads to the third possible strategy.

Creating goodwill is the third strategy. Goodwill leads to support and is also related to resource dependence theory. If an initiative is more important to the municipality (or community) it is more likely to receive support or not be cut back. The contacts strategy can also change over time, from resistance to creating good-will or reverse. The clearest example is initiative III that first tried to mobilize and resist but was unable to prevent cutbacks and then decided to improve contacts with the community and municipality. This created more understanding and goodwill and resulted in cancellation of a new cutback proposal in a later round.

Another example is initiative IV which had positive regular contacts with the municipality and partner initiatives. These contacts gave them an advantage; they were aware of incoming cutbacks. This helped them to anticipate and prevent cutbacks by proposing a merger to need less funding in the future.

Talents & time

When studying 'talents and time' strategies it shows there is a wide range of participants; capable, economically strong, intelligent ('talented') participants and those with that lack these aspects. At the same time, 'talents' is a broad term and participants that lack certain parts can still have useful other talents. None of the initiatives was able to increase talents in a short time by training or recruiting.

Initiatives with talented participants were often able to anticipate cutbacks, generate revenue and make important strategic choices. An example is initiative IV that had participants who were able to maintain positive contacts with partners and the municipality, creating a knowledge advantage in times of cutbacks which they used to draft their own merger proposal. This was due to a board with paid professionals that possessed these important talents. But paid professionals is not the only way to have talented participants. Initiative V also uses their skills to maintain contacts with partners that are able to provide funding in the future and used their skills in financing to create long-term planning to create reserves. Initiative VI consciously used the strategy to generate more revenue through its participants. This was possible because their participants had the necessary funds, but more importantly because their board was able to calculate this option and ensure continuity when asking higher prices, which led to support from the participants.

Initiatives that lacked these options had to look for other ways. Initiative I used a small amount of 'talented' board members to provide funding because the rest of their participants was unable to spend private money on the initiative. Initiative III replaced people with more talented ones which helped them to create a new image of their initiative, reform their contacts and business model.

Initiative II had to make a change from a funded, semi-professional organization to a volunteer organization. It was this change that would cost the 'talented' participants a much bigger time investment and they were unable or unwilling to do that.

Besides the initiatives' strategies, the municipalities were of influence on the continuity. Municipalities make the cutback decision, the cutback policy, the participation rules etc. These can all affect how well an initiative is able to deal with cutbacks. The 'Institutionalization' and 'Empathy' factors are not directly related to the different strategies, but have influence on the outcomes of cutbacks and can help to determine a strategy.

Institutionalization

Looking at institutionalization it is visible that municipalities often changed structural funding to incidental funding to deliver cutbacks. This cutback strategy was not targeted at initiatives, but a general strategy to reduce structural spending. This however, meant that most initiatives lost their structural income, which most of them were depending on.

Most cutbacks were delivered in multiple rounds, but how these rounds were communicated differs strongly. Some initiatives were informed of all the rounds in a single decision, others were uncertain of their funding for multiple rounds. The uncertainty made it difficult for initiatives to plan, but at the same time gave them opportunities to prevent future cutbacks. Initiative III managed to do this by resisting and increasing their image preventing a second cutback while Initiative V was announced in a single decision, but cut back in multiple rounds. This allowed initiative V to plan and create reserves which helps them to continue for many years and stretch the time to find new sources of income.

Empathy

Besides the policies and rules of the municipalities, empathy is an aspect in the ACTIE model. Empathy refers to the behaviors and attitude displayed by the municipality which can both support or hamper the initiative. In the results it turned out that 'empathy' was mostly displayed in communication.

Most initiatives reported very little room to talk and only being involved after the cutback decision was already made. On the other hand most initiatives report having a positive relationship until the decision and having empathic conversations, but no concrete actions.

Municipalities barely offered their support by helping initiatives to find alternatives. Also, the municipalities never offered extra support on their own, only after resistance and protests were they trying to find alternatives such as incidental funding. Oftentimes the city council seemed empathic, but offered no actual support when voting, arguing they had no choice. Also, the alternatives they offered were often uninformed and unrealistic.

Comparing 'Institutionalization' and 'Empathy' it seems that Institutionalization has a stronger effect on continuity and offers more options in sense of strategy. Empathy can mostly be found in the way a municipality communicates in times of cutbacks. Especially the city council often offers sympathetic communications, but at the same time concludes they had no choice, which is striking since they are the decision- making body.

5.1 Recommendations

When offering recommendations there are two groups to consider; initiatives and municipalities. Both have to determine what is most fitting for their situation. For community initiatives there are two important notes:

- Find and use talents
- Ensure goodwill through contacts

Initiatives that have talented participants, either in their core group (board) or wider range of participants seem to have a higher chance of continuity. Recognizing this and using the strengths of the initiative can help find alternatives such as generating more revenue or decreasing structural costs. The important aspect in this is finding the right strengths and realizing what talents you lack. This realization helps in formulating a successful and fitting strategy.

Talents is more than skills, it can also be financial capability or time investment. Even organizing more events or increasing opening hours can help to generate more revenue through participants. For

example; if participants lack important knowledge to redevelop your business model, investing more time and organizing more events can already help to increase income.

Besides using the initiative’s strengths, it is important to have a positive relationship with the municipality. Initiatives that were able to maintain such a relationship were able to anticipate cutbacks or prevent them. A good relationship creates goodwill, understanding and helps in strengthening resource dependence. The strategy often is best when it is a combination of ‘contacts’ and ‘talents’ because more understanding and support helps, but decreasing costs or increasing revenue is key to continuity. When municipalities see the efforts to adapt and continue, they are often supportive.

Not just the initiatives have influence over continuity. The municipality is able to steer their decision in a direction that gives initiatives better chances. When offering the municipality recommendations there are a few things to consider:

- Create flexibility
- Offer support and help to find strengths
- Use targeted cuts

Initiatives need space to create a strategy and adapt if they are able to continue. This flexibility can be provided in multiple ways, but is influenced by two factors: time and outcome.

Flexibility in:	Time: no	Time: yes
Outcome: no	No flexibility	Time flexibility
Outcome: yes	Outcome flexibility	Total flexibility

Table 6: flexibility in time and outcome

Creating flexibility over time can be done by making a single cutback decision with cutbacks over multiple years. This creates certainty and stability. Initiatives know what the total cutbacks will be and get a chance to plan ahead. This helps to create reserves or implement measures for long-term gains.

A second way to allow for adaptation in time is by cutting back in multiple decisions spread over multiple years. This approach creates a lot of uncertainty, but also allows initiatives to improve. By allowing the initiatives to improve their value for the municipality may also increase which reduces the necessity of cutting back on them in the future.

Creating flexibility in sense of outcome is another way to allow initiatives to develop a strategy. Multiple initiatives were steered towards a specific outcome (Initiative II had to change to a voluntary organization and III was steered towards a merger). This not only challenges them financially, but also needs them to create a specific strategy to reach the desired outcome. The specific strategy may not fit their strengths or not help them to continue.

Offering support and help to find alternatives is the most difficult to use in practice. Most initiatives felt the municipality did not want them to be discontinued, but it was also unable to provide support. However, allowing the initiative to use municipality facilities such as printing or working spaces can help to ensure continuity without high costs. Another example could be to bring the initiative in contact with useful partners such as merger options or sponsors. Also helping initiatives find their strengths can be a way for the municipality to offer support and allow the initiative to develop a working strategy.

Using targeted cuts helps to deliver cutbacks where they are most effective. This can be more difficult because there will be more discussion about what are considered core services, but once this discussion is concluded it is possible make larger cuts. During these discussions it is important to consider the demands of the community as well as likeliness the initiative continues after cuts.

5.2 Relevance & future research

As described in chapter section 1.4, this thesis uses the ACTIE model to get insights in community initiatives and how they dealt with cutbacks. This approach helps to develop the ACTIE model by testing its practical application as well as adding the 'cutbacks' dimension to it. In the next section this use of the ACTIE model will be further reflected upon.

In section 1.4 it was also mentioned that cutbacks in relation to citizen participation had not been studied much. One example of these studies is done by Igalla and Meerkerk (2015) who describe the sustainability of citizen initiatives through multiple factors: The network structure of the citizens' initiative, organizational design and earnings model. Understanding how to sustain/preserve citizen initiatives by understanding what factors affect this could be a useful tool for the future. Combining the findings of Igalla and Meerkerk plus using other models (such as ACTIE) may provide new insights that help preservation of initiatives in the future.

When looking at future research, there are multiple options. First, a study with the ACTIE model on initiatives that have been cut back could be performed on a quantitative level with a larger sample size. This helps generate results that are more generalizable and would test the findings of this thesis.

Secondly it would be useful to develop a model based on ACTIE and other studies such as the work of Igalla and Meerkerk (2015) that specifically incorporates the event of cutbacks on community initiative/citizen initiatives/participation. This model would provide civil servants with a practical tool to both deliver cutbacks and preserve initiatives that are valuable.

5.3 Reflection

Reflecting on the use of the ACTIE model there is a few things to mention. Most importantly, the theory is not specifically designed to look at initiatives during cutbacks. This means that, as mentioned in the previous section, developing a theory that incorporates parts of the theories such as ACTIE and CLEAR with theories about preserving initiatives such as Igalla and Meerkerk's (2015) would create a better basis to work with when looking at the event of cutbacks. The ACTIE model describes factors that affect how well community initiatives perform. However, even a well performing initiative has to make changes and create a strategy to deal with substantial cutbacks. The ACTIE model does not look into extraordinary situations, but functioning in general.

Another reflection is that ACTIE is missing an important aspect that affects community initiatives, not only during cutbacks, but community initiatives in general. The aspect missing is 'goodwill' or 'resource dependence'. This theory explains why some initiatives receive support while others do not. This is due to the service they provide and how well it fits within the policies or the municipality. It is this dependence that makes municipalities open to conversation, willing to look for alternatives or even cancel cutbacks. In extent to ACTIE in general, the goodwill of the municipality may also affect how well the initiative is supported in the 'institutionalization' and 'empathy' aspect, for example through less bureaucracy, use of services and goods etc.

Finally, ACTIE can be split into two sections, as done in this thesis. ACT focusses on the factors of the initiative while IE focusses on the municipality. This IE aspect is very interesting because these are factors from outside the initiative that both influence the success of an initiative, but can also be influenced by the initiative (through contacts and strategy as described in 5.1 recommendations). However, in this thesis the perception of IE has been studied through the scope of the initiatives. This leads to a one-sided image of IE. On the other hand, it is interesting to find out what the differences between the perception of IE are through both initiatives and municipalities to see what the effects of perception are.

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Tables & figures

Table 1: Continuity outcomes	3
Table 2: Cutback strategies Based on Pollit et al 2011:28	9
Table 3: ACTIE and CLEAR compared	10
Table 4: Example cutback list (anonimized)	11
Table 5: Summary of research findings	31
Table 6: flexibility in time and outcome.....	35
Figure 1: Research design based on ACTIE model.....	8

Appendix 1

Interview questions Initiatives

Naam initiatief:

Initiatief bestaat wel/niet meer

Naam geïnterviewde(n):

Datum:

Vragenlijst initiatief

- Startvraag: zou u kort kunnen samenvatten wat het initiatief inhoudt?
- Situationeel: Hoe afhankelijk is het initiatief van subsidie?
- Situationeel: Hoe is de bezuiniging te typeren? (Breuk, incidenteel, structureel)
- Wat heeft het initiatief gedaan met oog op de bezuinigingen?

Aims & Ambitions

- Wat is het doel van het initiatief?
- Waarom doen de vrijwilligers het werk hier dat zij doen?
- Hoe werd aangekeken tegen de aangekondigde bezuinigingen destijds?
- Welke nieuwe ambities en doelen waren er nodig (met oog op de bezuinigingen)?
- Hoe zijn die nieuwe ambities en doelen verworven?
- Hoe zijn die nieuwe ambities en doelen ingezet? (conflict of eigen weg)
- Hielp dit? Wat was het effect?

Contacts

- Welke contacten heeft het initiatief met derden?
- Zijn er sponsors?
- Met wie van de gemeente had het initiatief contact? (Raad, B&W, ambtenaar)
- Hoe is het contact met de gemeente te typeren?
- Hoe kunt u de achterban/doelgroep/vrijwilligers beschrijven?
- Hoe was het contact met achterban?
- Zijn er nieuwe contacten ontwikkeld met oog op de bezuinigingen?
- Hoe zijn die contacten verworven?
- Hoe zijn die contacten ingezet?
- Hielp dit? Wat was het effect?

Talents & Time (financiële bronnen, kennis en vaardigheden, inzetbare tijd)

- Is er noemenswaardige kennis/expertise/vaardigheden onder de vrijwilligers wat hielp?
- Hoe veel tijd kunnen de vrijwilligers steken in het initiatief?
- Hoe veel geld/middelen kunnen deelnemers steken in het initiatief? (Lidmaatschap, donaties, consumptie prijzen)
- Welke nieuwe 'talenten' waren er nodig? Hoe zijn die 'talenten' verworven?
- Hoe zijn die 'talenten' ontwikkeld?
- Hoe zijn die 'talenten' ingezet?
- Hielp dit? Wat was het effect?

Institutionalization

- Is de subsidie geformaliseerd en voert de gemeente alleen uit, of is het een politieke keuze van de gemeente?
- Wat moet het initiatief doen om de subsidie te krijgen/behouden?
- Zijn er andere inkomstenbronnen naast de subsidie?
- Hoe zijn de lasten te typeren? (Huur, vaste lasten, of alleen activiteit gebonden)
- Was er mogelijkheid tot inspraak?

Empathy

- Hoe werd de bezuiniging bekend gemaakt?
- Hoe was de houding van de contactpersoon bij de gemeente tijdens de bezuinigingen?
- Hoe was de houding van de raad tegenover het bezuinigingsvoorstel of individuele partijen?
- Hoe was de houding van B&W?
- Werde er meegedacht vanuit de gemeente voor oplossingen in andere vorm dan subsidie?
- Werde er meegedacht voor oplossingen of alternatieven?
- Heeft u mogelijkheid gehad om de pijn te verzachten?