

**9<sup>th</sup> PUBLIC MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
CONFERENCE**

**University of Arizona, Tucson**

**October 2007**

**IRSPM Panel**

**Creating Something from Nothing?  
Explaining the Democratic Performance of Low  
Legacy Institutions for Integrating New  
Migrants in Three European Cities<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) supported the production of this paper under Research Award RES-000-23-1295 'Democratic anchorage of governance networks in European countries'. Dr. Jeffares is a Research Associate at UWE; Dr. Skelcher is Professor of Public Governance, University of Birmingham

## **Abstract**

*This paper addresses the question of how, under conditions of network governance, democratic imperatives are accommodated in the institutional designs for public policy. The paper takes a critical perspective on the idea that network governance is the predominant mode of governance in liberal democracies. It examines a new policy issue affecting three European cities – the integration of new migrants – where network governance theory would predict the creation of new institutions operating under conditions of self-regulation, autonomous from elected politicians, and subject to metagovernance. Drawing on an analogy from computer science, these are termed low legacy institutions. Empirical research shows that low legacy institutions in the three cities have different relations with representative government. The paper concludes that the universalism of network governance cannot be taken for granted and offers a provisional explanation that proposes national democratic and governmental traditions as a key variables in explaining the extent to which network governance is realised.*

## **Introduction**

This paper addresses the question of how, under conditions of network governance, democratic imperatives are accommodated in the institutional designs for public policy. The construct ‘network governance’ has emerged, particularly in a European context, as a way of expressing changes in the way public policy is framed, agreed, and implemented (Forrest 2003). It proposes a weakening of direct political authority over policy sectors in the face of greater involvement of business and civil society actors in new arenas beyond the structures of representative government. To the extent these institutions are low legacy – creating something from nothing – their democratic performance becomes a matter for scholarly and public interest. Democratic performance concerns the alignment of such institutions with the obligations incumbent on entities undertaking a public function. In this paper we examine these issues in relation to a new policy issue of how cities integrate new migrants.

There are two reasons why we are interested in examining the democratic performance of extra-governmental institutions through which public policy is governed and managed. First, the network governance literature suggests a process of jurisdictional creation. This provides the means through which government can institutionalise the self-governance of a policy sector. Jurisdictions provide the structure through which political authority can be exercised over a defined geographical and policy space. Under conditions of network governance, where public policy may be determined beyond representative government and public bureaux, these jurisdictions can be regarded as ‘low-legacy’ institutions. In other words, they are designed afresh to meet the prevailing conditions rather than being predicated on longstanding but potentially outdated design principles. Low legacy institutions, because they are beyond representative government, raise questions of democratic performance, including how legitimacy is assured, proposals for decision are contested and agreed, and accountability is exercised.

The second reason for considering these institutions is that it enables us to critically examine the literature on network governance and democracy. The academic debate about the relationship between network governance and democracy is in a confused state (Klijn and Skelcher 2007). It contains the seldom-challenged conventional wisdom of a shift from 'government to governance', which proposes that the direct authority of representative government is reduced, and that of other actors increased. The debate is often associated with a normative position that privileges deliberative and participative forms of democracy over conventional representative forms. There is a tendency for the network governance literature to universalise its findings, rather than to distinguish the mediating impact of national context. And theoretical speculation passes untested due to the paucity of solid empirical evidence generated through rigorous fieldwork. We are sceptical about these commonly propounded notions about network governance and seek to provide a more nuanced and empirically-grounded perspective.

The paper starts by setting out the precepts of network governance as they relate to questions of democratic theory. We show that the literature offers a number of propositions about the low legacy institutional designs that can be expected under conditions of network governance. We then set out our research design. The next section sets out the national and European policy context for the case studies of the three cities. We then report our three case studies of new migrant policy in Birmingham, Copenhagen and Rotterdam. The paper reflects on the literature on network governance and democracy, and proposes a revised position. The conclusion draws out the implications for future study and for institutional design by policy makers.

## **Network governance, democracy and low legacy institutions**

### ***Democratic consequences of network governance***

The literature on network governance posits a fundamental change in the predominant logic through which democratic states have formulated, agreed and delivered policies and programmes that affect the welfare of citizens, groups and the society as a whole. Its central hypothesis is that state-centric modes of policy making based on the primacy of representative democracy are being supplemented or supplanted by those based on interdependencies between government, business and civil society (Goldsmith and Eggers 2004; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; Pierre and Peters 2000). This moves beyond the notion of neo-corporatist policy networks as mechanisms for interest intermediation between peak groups at national level (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). It emphasises mutuality, horizontal distribution of authority, operational autonomy, and negotiation of institutional rules and policy decisions. For example, Sorensen and Torfing (2005: 197) refer to governance networks as:

...a relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors who interact through negotiations that take place within a relatively institutionalised community which is self-regulating within limits set by external agencies and contributes to the production of public purpose.

In the European context, network governance is also linked to the idea of multi-level governance, where actors interact in patterns that transcend spatial scales (e.g. Hooghe and Marks 2001; Peters and Pierre 2000).

This paper focuses on three elements of this literature. First, the literature proposes that networks are self-regulating (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004; Rhodes 1997). They have discretion over their institutional designs. Hajer (2003) for example proposes that the nature of new and complex policy problems facing society leads to an institutional void where actors negotiate on both policy goals and the institutional arrangements for their governance. This contrasts with state-centric modes of governance where there may be discussion with non-governmental actors about policy goals, but the designs for governance reflect pre-existing templates for state bureaucracies and agencies. As government opens up to interactive decision-making, so it relaxes the assumptions of hierarchy and control that informed the earlier models of bureaucratic public administration embedded in the mid-nineteenth century Pendleton and Northcote-Trevelyan reforms in the US and UK respectively. In its place comes the idea of self-regulation between the network actors. Ideas about resource exchange, mutuality, cooperation and trust feature significantly in the literature, and inform such claims about self-regulation.

A second feature of the literature is the argument that governance networks have a significant degree of autonomy from elected politicians. The literature points to the plurality of actors engaged in governance networks and the consequent change in the role of elected politicians (Klijn and Skelcher 2007). In general, the literature points to elected politicians playing a marginal role, and in some cases being entirely absent from the core network arenas (Skelcher 2007; Wälti, Kübler and Papadopoulos 2003), although there are differences between countries – a point to which we will return (de Rynck and Voets 2006). It also highlights the problems of bureaucratic accountability and democratic legitimacy that arise from these new forms of interest intermediation and decision-making (O'Toole 1997; Papadopoulos 2003; Sullivan 2003). The generally accepted view is that elected politicians are not central to network structures. This particularly reflects the managerialist motivations for the development of network governance in practice (Newman 2001). Network governance potentially increases the capacity of managers to negotiate the complexities of policy development and implementation, over and above that offered by new public management-type reforms. Just as NPM redefines elected politicians' roles as being policy making and strategic oversight, so network governance takes the management function even further away from the representative democratic system

Third, the literature proposes that governance networks are subject to limits set by external agencies. Because they pursue public policy objectives, governance networks are never completely autonomous from the state. They may operate at arm's length to elected politicians, but are not outside the jurisdiction of government. This insight has stimulated consideration of the idea of metagovernance – the governance of self-governance (Sørensen 2006). Thus governance networks are not completely autonomous, but are subject to strategic interventions by political actors. Sørensen (2006) proposes a number of ways in which such meta-governance may be exercised, including framing, storytelling, support, and participation on an equal basis. So although political actors may not be part of the governance network, they

nevertheless exert some influence at some moments. And where they are participants, this literature suggests that their metagovernance role can only be exercised when they discount their authority as an elected politician.

### *Self-regulating networks as low legacy institutions*

Our interest in analysing the democratic performance of governance networks leads us to focus on the institutional designs that are created by these self-regulating entities. These designs can be considered low legacy institutions, because they are not predicated on the traditional bureaucratic templates that inform the design of governmental bodies. This contrasts with the development and delivery of public policy through institutions based on the model of representative democracy, which can be considered a legacy system.

The concept of a legacy system draws from the computer science literature and refers to an infrastructure whose hardware and/or software predates existing technology (Brooke and Ramage 2001). Thus, aspects of the institutional design of legislatures predate current possibilities. For example, the idea of ‘representation’ of citizens predates the technical possibilities now available for direct democracy using ICT.<sup>2</sup> In the computer science field, the definition of infrastructure as a legacy system is associated the idea that it is maintained in use despite the availability of better technology. The explanations for its continued use include that it contains valuable databases run on proprietary software, or because the financial or organisational cost of replacement is too high. Under these circumstances, investment will only be made where it is deemed essential in order to sustain its operability, for example software patches can be retrofitted to reduce newly identified security risks. This logic can be extended to representative democracy. Here, societal changes and new possibilities for democratic activity have emerged in recent years. However representative democracy remains the pre-eminent mode of societal decision-making because of the sunk investment in this form of governance. This is so great that deliberation, participation and other technologies of democracy are retrofitted as patches to improve the functioning of the existing system rather than undertaking a fundamental reform.

These patches to representative democracy include the introduction of new institutions through which civil society and business alone, together or in relationship with government govern a policy sector. These can be considered low legacy institutions within a legacy system. As Klijn and Skelcher (2007) have pointed out, such institutional designs have not supplanted representative democracy and can be considered in terms of at least four conjectures: that they are incompatible with representative democracy, that they complement representative democracy, that they are part of a transition to post-representative forms of democracy, and that they are a new instrument of control by representative government.

## **Low legacy institutions: the case of new migrant policy**

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<sup>2</sup> We recognise that the institution of ‘representation’ is not solely a function of technological limitations in earlier times, but is also under some models of democracy related to the desire to moderate the influence of citizens on government.

### ***Contextualising low legacy institutions***

Low legacy institutions offer the purest example of creating something from nothing, and therefore are of considerable value as a site for empirical investigation by researchers interested in the democratic performance of governmental institutions. In government, for example, a new policy problem is often dealt with by utilising an established template such as the creation of a department or executive agency. Outside representative government, and within the discourses of managerialism, citizen participation and network governance, more opportunities are possible. These include various forms of jurisdiction creation such as third party self-governance (for example, business improvement districts), non-profit companies built around multi-agency collaboration, citizen and user controlled agencies, and non-corporate entities (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). The way in which the design for a low legacy institution resolves the fundamental democratic imperatives for public governance provides empirical evidence to assist us to critically evaluate and refine the theory of network governance. It should help us to establish the extent to which self-regulation relates to the absence of elected politicians and the exercise of metagovernance.

However the exploration of these low legacy institutions often neglects the importance material factors associated with specific times and places. Research into network governance tends to generate conclusions that take on a life abstracted from the empirical conditions in which they were developed, reinforced by an ontology that privilege the role of ideas and discourse over the material conditions of existence. There is some move to counter this tendency. Bevir, Rhodes and Weller (2003) argue that scholars should understand the importance of tradition in shaping national governmental systems. The institutionalisation of national norms of government and democracy are likely to impact differentially on network governance (and, indeed, whether it can be said to exist). So research on governance networks undertaken in a country with a strong unitary system of government is likely to lead to different conclusions than a similar study in a country with traditions of consociational and participative democracy. Kriesi, Adam and Jochum (2006) go further than this. Their comparative analysis across Europe shows that both national norms and the features of the policy system are important determinants of power configurations in networks. They conclude that “future research should no longer aim at national-level generalisation about power configurations and policy processes, but needs to understand the combined impact of the country- and policy-specific contexts.” (op cit: 358). But beyond this, the focus on the specifics of a case enables us to understand something about how interests are mediated in the political struggles around policy issues, and to begin to address some of the traditional political science questions about who gains and who loses.

### ***Examining new migrant policy***

The phenomenon of migration into European cities provides a novel policy problem. It is complex and multi-dimensional. It potentially touches a wide variety of public, civil society and private actors, and has considerable political salience. Consequently it can be expected to generate solutions within a network governance framework and thus is a good case through which to examine whether low legacy institutions are created, and the extent to which these engage in self-regulation, distance from politicians and are subject to metagovernance.

For many years in Europe the focus of migration policy was on national governments and their immigration policies, and until recently little systematic attention has been paid to policy for the economic, social and political integration of migrants in cities. Now, this issue is on the ascendance and it is primarily a concern for city governance, as Niessen and Engberink (2006: 1) observe:

The arrival of large numbers of new residents in the cities of the European Union creates great opportunities for innovation and progress in social, economic and cultural development. It poses at the same time serious challenges for social cohesion and stability. Successful management of integration therefore is high on the agendas of all levels of government, not only the [European] Union, but also national governments and local authorities. Local authorities find themselves in the frontline: success and failure of integration is first and foremost experienced at the local level. Integration is essentially a local process

Integration is a term whose meaning is politically contested and subject to change. In the late 1990s and early 1990s when asylum applications were at an all time high in the UK and other EU countries, integration became associated specifically with refugee and asylum policy (Schuster 2003; Zetter et al 2003). Since the expansion of the European Union to 25 and then 27 countries, the influx of migrants from new member states present new opportunities to reduce labour shortages but also presents new challenges for policy makers in those cities affected. Moreover, for some countries, such as Denmark, the discussion is less about 'new comers' and more about earlier waves of migrants who live separately from the wider society, are unable to speak the language, and experience high levels of unemployment. This segregation has been seen to lead to further problems, including racism and low social cohesion, that require a public policy response.

Migration policies in Europe have evolved over several years (Fielding 1993) however the focus on integration is relatively recent (Givens 2007). The earliest example of a national integration policy was the Netherlands in 1983. However for most European countries specific integration legislation and initiatives date back only as far as the late 1990s. The European Council Summit in October 1999 in Tampere (Finland) was a key turning point. EU leaders agreed that common immigration policies should be matched by ensuring the integration of third country nationals residing in the European Union. The Thessaloniki European Council in 2003 endorsed a network of National Contact Points on integration to 'create a forum for the exchange of information and best practice between Member States at EU level with the purpose of finding successful solutions for integration of immigrants in all Member States and to ensure policy co-ordination and coherence at national level and with EU initiatives' (Justice and Home Affairs website). The following year at the Hague council summit, leaders adopted eleven Common Basic Principles on integrating third country nationals (see Figure 1 below). These are non-binding but are offered to assist Member States engaged in formulating their national policies and form a base to develop multi-layered integration policies at the EU, national, regional and local level. The Common Basic Principles were then developed and published in September 2005 as 'A Common Agenda for Integration'. In November 2004 the first European Commission Handbook on Integration was published, with a second edition

in July 2007. In addition, since 2004 the Commission has published an ‘Annual Report on Migration and Integration’

### **Figure 1: Common Basic Principles for the Integration of Third Country Migrants into EU Member States**

1. ‘Integration is a dynamic, **two-way process** of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’
2. ‘Integration implies respect for the **basic values** of the European Union’
3. ‘**Employment** is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible’
4. ‘Basic knowledge of the host society’s **language, history, and institutions** is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration’
5. ‘Efforts in **education** are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society’
6. ‘**Access** for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration’
7. ‘Frequent **interaction** between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens’
8. ‘The practice of **diverse cultures and religions** is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law’
9. ‘The **participation** of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration’
10. ‘**Mainstreaming** integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public-policy formation and implementation’
11. ‘Developing clear goals, indicators and **evaluation mechanisms** are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective’

Integration is an emerging policy area. In May 2007, Potsdam hosted the first Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Integration, the second Integrating Cities Conference will take place in Milan in November 2007, following the first in Rotterdam in October 2006 (See Integrating Cities 2006, with speeches from both Dutch and Danish ministers for Integration: Verdonk 2006 and Hvilshoj 2006). A European Integration Forum is currently being developed as is a European Commission website specifically orientated around integration. Since 2003, the Commission has been co-financing trans-national integration projects (INTI 2006). From 2007 this is replaced by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals to run until 2013 as part of the Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows.

Although European institutions and member states continue to establish a common integration strategy, integration policy is primarily a local and urban concern (Bosswick and Heckmann 2006), and Eurocities, a network representing local governments of 129 large European cities, has taken a lead role in this issue:

Issues around migration and integration are of central concern to Europe's cities, which are also the places where a majority of migrant populations live. Immigrants contribute positively to their host societies, adding to the cultural richness and economic dynamism of our leading cities. At the same time, the changing social and cultural urban make-up presents challenges for the management of cities in terms of service provision, including for example housing, education and healthcare services, and in terms of social cohesiveness. (Eurocities 2006: 4)

However, reading the European wide discussion of integration alone overlooks the diversity of approaches followed in each Member State and by each major city. Integration is often highly contentious. On the one hand integration is associated with disproportionate transfer of resources to immigrant communities at the expense of national citizens on the other integration is associated with 'assimilation' where at the limit immigrants are expected to surrender national cultural identity (Joppke and Morawska 2006). For both these reasons, there is a sensitivity surrounding integration policies not found in other areas of European or urban public policy.

## **Research design**

The research involves case studies of integration governance in three European cities: Birmingham in England, Copenhagen in Denmark, and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. All are major cities of comparable size, and have been the focus of migration waves historically and recently. As a result, Rotterdam, Copenhagen and Birmingham are some of the most ethnically diverse cities in their respective countries. The countries in which they are located have different traditions of government and democracy. The UK is a highly centralised unitary state with a tradition of pragmatism in its governance (Bevir and Rhodes 2003). Denmark has a long tradition of interaction between government and civil society associations, and of consensus seeking in politics (Jørgensen 2002). The Netherlands has traditionally been a pillarised society in which elites negotiate through a consociational bargaining system, although this is now changing to some extent (Andeweg and Irwin 2005; Woldendorp and Keman 2007). On a practical level we have strong relationships and support from our research partners at Roskilde and Erasmus universities, and English is widely spoken in each country.

Migrant integration policy offers a specific arena within which to undertake an analysis of the democratic performance of institutional arrangements for the governance of the sector. As we discussed above, a central feature of our analytical approach is to understand the way in which the general discourse of network governance is mediated by the material circumstances of migration policy in each city. We expect, on the basis of network governance theory, that these policy measures will involve the creation of low legacy institutions. Such institutions will be

self-regulating, with weak connections to representative democracy, but subject to some form of metagovernance. Yet we are also aware that migrant policy is a highly contested arena politically, and this might create incentives to a legacy design: that is, institutions that are closely integrated into existing political structures and with low levels of self-regulation capacity.

Our approach is informed by Mode II research principles (Gibbons et al 1994). The initial phase, reported here, draws on 25 face-to-face in-depth interviews with politicians, public managers in city and other relevant tiers of government, civil society actors, and researchers working in these cities. Interviews were undertaken between February and June 2007 and at the same time we gathered a corpus of documents. The interviews were semi-structured using a topic guide, and were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. The conclusions of our initial analysis will be reviewed in November at a 24-hour workshop in Birmingham with a sample of key political, public manager and civil society organisation respondents from the 3 cities, together with academics working in the field. Subsequently, we will undertake further interviews and produce a policy report to be distributed through the relevant European cities network.

This paper reports initial analysis, but further work remains to be done and the paper will be revised subsequent to this conference.

## **Migrant policy discourses: national and city components**

Migration is a conceptually and politically complex field, as too is integration. There have been numerous attempts to classify different approaches to immigration and integration, such as multi-culturalism models (e.g. Netherlands), assimilationism models (e.g. France) and 'rigid' models (e.g. Switzerland). However, as Carrera argues these traditional national models of integration are no longer valid in a European context because of the degree of flux in this area of policy caused by 'evolving contemporary realities, political and economic priorities and dramatic events' (Carrera 2005: page, see also Joppke 2007). Carrera adds, 'Member States differ considerably in their approaches and political priorities vis-à-vis the integration of migrants. This diversity mainly derives from the different historical backgrounds, societal models and patterns and traditions of migration flows' (Carrera 2005: 4). However, although Carrera maybe correct to problematise these typologies, other writers have noted a convergence in immigration and integration measures such as compulsory language (see Joppke 2007; Givens 2007). In our approach we examine how the contemporary policy discourse is historically situated nationally and at city level.

### ***Migrant integration policy framing in the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands***

The **British** approach to integrating migrants is known widely as an example of multiculturalism. There have been several waves of immigration, most notably workers in the 1960s from the West Indies, India and Pakistan. The focus on immigration and integration has recently come into focus for slightly different reasons. In the 1990s, the increase in asylum applications saw the Conservative

Government and subsequent new labour government implement a series of more stringent etc – however numbers have never reflected the amount of attention in certain areas of the media (see Dwyer 2005).

Integration or ‘community cohesion’ as it is commonly referred in the UK context has been questioned since the early 2000s, with violent unrest in Northern towns of Oldham and Blackburn, the events in the USA in September in 2001 and in July 2005 the bombings in London by British born Muslims. All of this suggests a failure of multicultural policy and an increased responsibility for towns and cities to successfully ‘integrate’ migrant communities and achieve social cohesion (see Straw 2007; Griffiths et al 2005).

**Figure 2: Policy framing and institutional design in Birmingham, Rotterdam and Copenhagen**

Country	Policy framing nationally	City	Policy framing at city level	Institutional design at city level
England	Modified multiculturalism	Birmingham	Advocating measured wisdom Low political priority	Free-standing multi-agency board; limited direct role of city council and other government agencies (is this correct??)
Netherlands	Assimilation in the face of an uncertain Dutch Identity	Rotterdam	Calm after the storm	Independent advisory board – city council departments responsible for areas of policy
Denmark	Close borders and integrate inside	Copenhagen	Social inclusion follows ethnic integration	Governance through mainstream city council political and managerial structures, with elected advisory council of migrants

In Britain, the key legislative tool has been the *Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002*. This followed the 1998 White Paper *Fairer Faster Firmer* (Home Office 1998) and led to guidance for not only the dispersal and housing of refugees, but also their successful ‘integration’ (e.g. Home Office 1999) which saw the first strategy for the integration of refugees in the UK (Home Office 2000) and then a national refugee integration strategy (Home Office 2004). This 2004 report defined possibilities for integration as immigrants being able to:

‘achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute fully to the community, and to become fully able to exercise their rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents’ (Home Office 2004: 6).

For the first time those seeking British Citizenship are expected to follow a ‘life in the UK’ syllabus and pass a British Citizenship test.

Integration also features as part of the refugee policy. Following increased strain on authorities in London, as with both Denmark and the Netherlands, the British government operate a dispersal arrangement under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act (Audit Commission 2000; Boswell 2001, see Robinson et al 2003 for comparison). There is also an issue of refugees who have received status to remain in other European countries but are unable to work, moving to the UK where they have the rights of a full UK citizen. However the concentration of particular communities, notably the concentration of Somalis from Denmark and Netherlands into Birmingham and Leicester (see Bang Niesen 2004). Most recently the commission for Integration and Cohesion published their proposals for ‘our shared future’ (Commission for Integration and Cohesion 2007).

The **Netherlands** has long been recognised as a land of tolerance and liberal acceptance however more recently this has been increasingly been brought into question (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; also Dieleman 1993). Between 1945 up until the mid 1970s, the borders were open to guest workers from, particularly, Turkey and Morocco. By the 1960s it was expected that workers would eventually return to their home countries, and therefore little need for them to fully ‘integrate’ into Dutch society. By the 1970s borders were tightened but immigrants continued to arrive from the Dutch colonies of Surinam and the Dutch Antilles. In 1979 the Dutch government realised many were staying and also bringing their families, through family reunification entitlements. In 1983 the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legislate on integration. By the early 2000s, the Dutch media began to increasingly question why despite two decades of integration policies so few immigrants and their decedents could speak the Dutch language. This was entwined in a broader debate about the weakness of Dutch identity as one of our interviewees stated:

“But in this whole discussion of integration I think there is one factor that is influencing I think Holland has lost its identity, we are now, since we have become part of Europe people are starting to wonder what is Holland what are we beyond tulips and wooden shoes” (Interview, R2).

Politicians suggested integration was undermined by an ideology that preserved cultural identity that was ‘consolidating and recreating the cultural distance between

ethnic and Dutch countries' (Bronsveld and Reijnierse 2003: 34). In 2001 the social taboo about questioning the integration policies were broken by Rotterdam politician Pim Fortuyn spoke out as Islam as a *backward* religion. Although he was shot in May 2002 his followers found electoral success and although their coalition failed after 80 days legislation further restricted immigration and incentivised integration (Bronsveld and Reijnierse 2003: 34). In November 2004, the controversial but popular film maker Theo Van Gogh was stabbed by a Dutch born Muslim extremist as Legrain describes following the murder the Minister for Integration and Immigration stated

'it has gone this far, and it goes no further'. Over twenty religious schools, mosques and churches burned down in tit-for-tat attacks. A dam had broken – and it looked as if support for multiculturalism had been swept away' (Legrain 2006: 270).

In the Netherlands the 1983 Integration or Minorities policy which focused on reducing socio economic disadvantage, discrimination and promoting participation and cultural expression (Bronsveld and Reijnierse 2003: 33), was replaced by the 1998 Integration of Newcomers Act (Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers) and the 2001 Aliens Act (Vreemdelingenwet). The former introduced a mandatory education programme for new third country immigrants and the latter act in 2001 expanded this education programme to be non-mandatory for existing first generation immigrants (oldcomers). The focus was on 500 hours of Dutch language teaching and 100 hours of Dutch orientation.

In comparison with the Netherlands and United Kingdom, **Denmark** has a far lower number of migrants. However in what is a small country of five million, there has long been a tradition of tight borders and strong national identity. Economic migrants came from Turkey, Pakistan and Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s, but since 1973 most migration has been through family reunification (Togeby 2004). It seems each of the three countries we are exploring have a key event or crisis which redefines the approach to integration: Oldham Riots and 7<sup>th</sup> July bombings in UK, murder of Fortuyn and Van Gogh in the Netherlands, then in Denmark it was the 'cartoon crisis' when in September 2005 the Danish Newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published twelve cartoon images of the Muslim prophet Mohammed (see Olesen 2007). There were angry protests in Denmark and across the world with burning of the Danish Danneborg flag boycotts of Danish products. As in Holland, it saw an increased questioning of neighbourhoods where 90 per cent immigrant, where Danish language was largely unspoken and between half and three quarters of the residents unemployed (DMRIIA 2005: 1). The explicit logic in Denmark is tight borders and to focus resources on integrating existing migrants.

In Denmark the key instrument was the 1999 Integration Act and the 2005 New Chance for Everybody following a recent report on improving integration (see Danish Government 2003a). The New Chance for Everybody is broad in its scope with a focus on four areas: education, unemployment, neighbourhoods and extremism. In each area the initiatives requirements to take language tests, and contextual incentives for immigrants to integrate, subsidise residents to leave 'vulnerable neighbourhoods' and financial incentives for local authorities to counter unemployment (see DMRIIA 2005).

In each country there has been a move towards combining immigration and integration policies, with restrictive border controls and nationality tests. There is a new or renewed focus on a comprehensive policy of integration that covers new migrants, including refugees and existing minorities including, particularly in Denmark, second and even third generations.

### ***Local contexts in Birmingham, Copenhagen and Rotterdam***

Having explored the national picture, we now turn to explore how integration policy is framed in our three case study cities of Birmingham, Copenhagen and Rotterdam.

**Birmingham** is the second largest city and one of England's most diverse. Politicians and officials have long prided themselves on their successful approach to multiculturalism. Nevertheless, the most ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods surrounding the inner city were and continue to be some of the most deprived in terms of employment and in turn have been the focus for numerous area based policies over the years.

Integration policy across Europe either combines or differentiates between new immigrants and previous or existing immigrants in their scope. In the case of Birmingham integration policy for existing migrants is absorbed into broader neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion measures on the one hand and tailored integration strategies for new migrants and refugees on the other.

What is also distinctive about the Birmingham approach is the plurality of agencies, actors and collaborations involved in what is a fragmented governance and funding arrangements following a successive hollowing out of local government responsibilities since the 1980s (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Strategy for the Integration of Newcomers developed by officials in Birmingham City Council (Birmingham City Council 2002). Since the centralised dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees in 1999 through the IMD of the Home Office, integration has been combined with dispersal at the regional level, in the case of Birmingham – the West Midlands. In 2005 it was estimated there were 6000 asylum seekers and between 10,000 and 15,000 refugees living in Birmingham (Griffiths et al 2005: 129). Because of this the numbers fall short of being of major concern to local policy makers. However, unlike the other cases, asylum seekers dispersed to the West Midlands are housed amongst host communities and like the other cases, there is a propensity for myths about welfare entitlements of asylum seekers. Because of this, housing of asylum seekers and 'integration' of refugees is seen by the British government at least to be best coordinated at a regional rather than a local level.

**Rotterdam** has been central to the integration debate in the Netherlands in recent years. Not only is Rotterdam the second largest city it is also the Netherlands' most ethnically diverse (Botman and van Kempen; Snel et al 2003). It is in Rotterdam where Pim Fortyne first expressed his outspoken views on Islam and the lack of integration in 2002 his local LR party 'Leefbaar Rotterdam' (Livable Rotterdam) gained the largest number of seats (16 out of 45 in March 2002) and formed a right of centre coalition with the Christian Democrats and the Conservatives (Maussen 2004: 157) which held power until March 2006. The coalition focused on security and integration of immigrants. In 2002 they introduced Delta Plan Integration which adds

to the requirements of the national integration policy. The proposals were controversial and attracted international media attention, particularly around housing policies to restrict immigrants moving into certain neighbourhoods (see Osborn 2003). This was followed in 2004 with the policy 'Rotterdam Presses On' (City of Rotterdam 2004) that defines integration closer to a concept of 'assimilation' which requires an adjustment of cultural values to be in line with 'Dutch Norms' and the city offering opportunities for immigrants to attend 'assimilation programme' (2004: 42). In 2004 Rotterdam held a series of debates on Islam, which received national attention (Bronsveld 2006). During the LR coalition a series of institutional arrangements were made regarding integration with for example four SPAR - Stimulation Project for Immigrants in Rotterdam projects for Antilleans, Turkish and Moroccan, Cape Verdean and young refugees (Bronsveld and Reijnierse 2003: 39). There was a move away from subsidising national based groups. Projects like 'Welcome to Rotterdam' funded projects where immigrants and Rotterdammers could meet and promote 'social integration' (City of Rotterdam 2004: 41). At our time of enquiry a new city coalition was in place – established in March 2006 with a Green-Left politician responsible for social participation. In January 2007 Rotterdam launched a policy of *Stadsburgerschap*, or *city citizenship*, (City of Rotterdam 2007). This is an explicit move away from 'integration' which had become associated with assimilation with 'Dutch norms' towards participation and citizenship (Uitermark and Duyvendak 2006).

'Integration, it's focused on how do we get the migrants or second generation or even third generation to how you say, participate or get involved in society and now we're not talking about migrants anymore. Participation and citizenship is for everyone so we're talking about the whole population and it's like a social approach. Everybody should get the chances and things then, in the end you don't even know what you are talking about anymore, so you don't know, well that's my opinion, we don't know actually what we are working on because every time if you say like social problem is nearly everything' (Interview R4T:7, Policy Officer).

However it is important to recognise that although the rhetorical appeal to integration may have been replaced by city citizenship – much of the institutional hardware remains in place. For example, the City of Rotterdam subsidises over 300 migrant organisations challenged through umbrella organisations: including two Muslim umbrella organisations and one refugee organisation. This is administered through the 'Integration and Participation Unit' (split into language, integration, empowerment of women, homosexuals, anti-discrimination and participation). In addition, despite the change in emphasis on integration, Rotterdam is obliged to oversee the teaching and examining of Dutch language and orientation courses. Rotterdam awards contracts to private and quasi-state education institutions.

**Copenhagen** as the capital of a small country is the only comparable city in Denmark with Rotterdam and Birmingham. Unlike Rotterdam, Copenhagen has always had a social democrat mayor. However, as the right of centre coalition began passing integration legislation in the early 2000s and measuring the performance of local authorities our interviewees reported it was becoming ever clearer that Copenhagen had neglected its 'integration' responsibilities. Since 1999, the city had introduced an integration council which was an appointed advisory board nominated by ethnic

minority groups and organisations. The turning point in Copenhagen's integration policies followed the 2005 election of a new social democrat mayor the former minister and European Commissioner: Ritt Bjerregaard (Copenhagen Post 2005). She stood on a manifesto of affordable housing and integration. In 2006, the City of Copenhagen agreed its first Integration Policy (City of Copenhagen 2006). Throughout it highlights the rising percentage of 'non ethnic Danes' up to 14%, of the low employment participation rate of immigrants at 47 % (2006: 12); of the poor educational performance of immigrants living in Copenhagen compared with other cities (2006: 20); of the link between 'vulnerable neighbourhoods' where unemployment is over 50% and the population is over 70 immigrant (2006: 26, see Lau and Mathiesen 2004); immigrants in Copenhagen are twice as likely to be given custodial sentences (2006: 32); only 30% of foreign born parents involve their daughters in sports clubs (2006: 55); and 47% of Turkish people in Copenhagen compared with the average of 30% (2006: 55). The Copenhagen integration policy is broad in its scope encompassing employment, education, housing, cultural activities and health. The aim is through the establishment of a series of integration 'barometers' to integrate non-ethnic Danes living in Copenhagen. This included the establishment of a mayor for employment and integration, a unit for integration within the employment and integration administration and direct elections for the previously appointed Copenhagen Integration Council.

***Conclusion: Policy framing in three contexts***

The analysis enables us to conclude that the framing of migration as a policy issue, and the nature of the overall policy response, has the following characteristics. In the case of England the debate about migrants peaked in the early 2000s and has since given way to debates about community cohesion. There is a growing emphasis on the responsibilities of migrants, including to learn the language, but this stops well short of the mandatory requirements of Denmark and the Netherlands. In small countries where national identity matters and Europeanisation can be a threat, language matters when immigrants in Copenhagen or Rotterdam choose to converse in either their home tongue or English. At the national level in Denmark and the Netherlands it remains politically advantageous to maintain stringent immigration requirements and centralised integration policies delivered by public, private and voluntary organisations but coordinated by local authorities. The difference is for the Netherlands this approach is relatively immature with Pym Fortyne capitalising on a debate that was previously taboo.

In turn national policy framing provide the backdrops for migration policy in each of our cities. For Birmingham any discussion of integration is largely confined to a specific group of refugee and new comers. In contrast, for Copenhagen integration refers to ethnic integration and the political will of the social democrat city is to be seen to be caring about what it calls its 'ghettos' or vulnerable neighbourhoods. Whereas other cities might focus on social inclusion or anti-poverty strategies, these problems are ethnic problems. In Copenhagen integration is now an important and performance managed priority and considers all those who fall outside the status of 'non-ethnic Dane'. In contrast, Rotterdam's current administration follows in the wake of attempts at uncharacteristic hard-line assimilation policies. Ethnic integration is politically loaded, uncomfortably synonymous with assimilation measures of Pym Fortuyn for it to be retained in the corporate rhetoric. Therefore despite the European Union developing common 'integration principles' and

Rotterdam even hosting the first integration conference in 2006, the focus is instead on rights and responsibilities of ‘citizenship’.

## **Institutional arrangements for the governance of migrant policy**

We now turn to an examination of the institutional arrangements for the governance of migrant integration policy in the three cities. We deal with this analysis city by city, highlighting the prevailing governance discourse, and then detailing the arrangements that have been used for this policy area.

### ***Birmingham***

In Birmingham we find a plethora of low legacy institutions, broadly ‘strategic partnerships’ operating at a city level in all areas of policy. These mechanisms are often the only means to coordinate the delivery of state, voluntary, private and local authority actors, and are part of the deeply embedded governance discourse of ‘partnership’ found throughout public policy initiatives in England (Newman 2001; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Migrant policy has not been immune from this prevailing institutional template.

The initial institutional structure for coordinated governance of migrant, or more specifically *forced* migrant (Dwyer 2005) policy in Birmingham was the West Midlands Consortium for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, as one of ten regional consortia established by the Home Office in 1999. Housing providers, both local authority, not-for-profit and private, bid for a share of the regional asylum budget. The contracts were coordinated by a nominated local authority in each region, in the West Midlands case Birmingham was the contract holder. The executive was then formed of representatives from each contract holder and service provider. The board was served by a small secretariat of a director and policy officers. The membership was therefore an executive of stakeholders, with a stake for the duration of the five year contract to provide a share of the housing for asylum seekers in the region. This is then a body sitting outside of direct political control of local authorities. However it has at no point been constituted as a legal entity in its own right, and is instead accountable to the regional Local Government Association whose membership is formed from local government councillors nominated by their respective local authorities from across the West Midlands Region.

During the 2005 contract renewal process the director of the West Midlands consortium’s secretariat set about redesigning the consortium as a ‘strategic partnership’ what became: **WMSPARS** (the West Midlands Strategic Partnership for Asylum and Refugees). This included a separate contractors’ board, a main board, an integration board and a series of operational theme boards. This move reflected the evolution of the consortium to address more than housing needs but about coordinating the strategic integration of refugees with the right to remain. In part it reflected change in policy nationally, however other regions have continued with a consortium model resembling the initial consortium in the West Midlands.

‘Now, the change from the consortium to strategic partnership is more than just the name, it is philosophically different, rather than just technical

changes...the reason why we decided to reframe around the partnership title was because that is exactly what we were doing...I thought this is daft, the current speak is partnership, we are working like a partnership, we develop strategic and operational issues, develop policies and we influence national policy, so why not call ourselves a strategic partnership?' (Interview, Partnership Director, B2: 2).

'The board is made up of all key stakeholders, both in statutory and voluntary sector and is chaired by a senior politician for the region. That is really important because...we work in a political market place...so we get political steer on all changes we want to bring about' (Interview, Partnership Director, B2: 3).

In both Copenhagen and Rotterdam the presence of a politician on a mixed board of governance actors would be almost unheard of. In the Birmingham case, the interviewee is emphasising the importance of a politician to bring legitimacy to the board. This is perhaps more important in the West Midlands case as unlike other regions, there are a higher proportion of contracts held by non-local authority housing actors. In the initial consortium eight West Midlands local authorities sat on the board, in the process of renewal four of these eight were unsuccessful. In contrast Yorkshire and Humber Region ten authorities remain in contract, as one board member commented 'for them it politically it raises the profile of this policy area for councils and the regional Local Government Association' (Interview B1). By this he is arguing the politician as chair and representation of statutory members is necessary to give WMSPARS a legitimate presence in the fragmented array of governance in West Midlands.

The director of the WMSPARS secretariat faces the challenge of both legitimacy and visibility within the region. With only four of the regions local authorities represented on the board, they have adopted a 'multi-agency partnership' with both presence of a politician but also appointed positions for what the director calls 'the consumer', or refugees:

'In our...multi-agency partnership we have representatives from the private sector, IMD Home Office, senior representatives from the local authority, from ACPO the association of chief police offices, association for directors of social services, and refuges organisations and what is probably very, very different is...the fact you need consumers at some point involved in the planning of services, so we have two refugees on our board' (Interview, Partnership Director, B2: 3).

Terms of reference were developed as part of the restructuring in 2005 (WMSPARS 2005). It suggests it is 'expected' the Chair will be a non-executive elected member nominated by the WMLGA. The criterion for board members is they 'will be senior representatives from their sectors and will be suitably skilled and experienced designated representatives' (WMSPARS 2005).

### ***Rotterdam***

The governance discourse in Rotterdam is one of city government taking the lead, but working alongside other actors from civil society and business. The city council originally had established a series of thematic platforms, including one on migrant policy. Recently, there was a dramatic move away from integration and previous low legacy institutions, known as ‘platforms’ disbanded to complement the policy. For example the strategic platforms for migrants, older people, and other groups were replaced by a single ‘social platform’ or SPR – Social Platform Rotterdam. This consists of twelve appointed board members. They meet together but are also each tied (in what way ‘tied’??) to four of Rotterdam’s most diverse neighbourhoods. They are an advisory board, independent from the constraints of political government. In addition, the chairperson, a former minister, advises the aldermen with social aspects in their portfolios. Clearly they can only focus on limited number of issues; however their status is thought to act as a catalyst to champion certain ideas. As the chair Pieter Winsemius suggests on the SPR website:

‘Rotterdam knows exactly what must be done. The problem is that professionals come up against closed doors. The role of the SPR is to accelerate their solutions. We can open doors which have remained closed for too long. The SPR are an outboard motor boat which helps to accelerate solutions of others’ (Pieter Winsemius, Chair of SPR, translated).

City officials are not required to follow the advice of the SPR, but of their Alderman. In Rotterdam, officials work for their respective alderman rather than the politicians of the City Council chamber. However we found the Alderman used the SPR as a legitimating body for new ideas. Legitimacy stems not from an elected authority, but from status and reputation of the chair and its members, for example: a former minister, a football club chairman, two professors, partner in a consultancy firm or a magazine editor.

‘Our alderman says to us you have to work the conclusions of their research paper into our emancipation plan or language course plan, we try to make something of it’ (Interview, R4: 12).

And...

‘It is legitimising his ideas. They are scientists, former ministers, they are men with reputations and it is a basis for his ideas. I think with a lot of politicians it works like this with advisory boards’ (T Interview, CS R4: 16).

However we also found this process contradicts how city officials understand the representative democratic process arguing reputation does not equal legitimacy:

It’s...an interesting development because you have the city council, they are of course elected...the people elect the council and then they should make the decisions the people want. But this board is going to ask all kinds of unelected people to just say something about the policy...but it is really funny because these people they don’t have any legitimacy. They are just names with reputation (Interview, R4: 12).

## ***Copenhagen***

Copenhagen's governance discourse reflects a belief in elected political authority working in association with social and business associations. In Copenhagen migrant policy is the responsibility of pre-existing political and administrative structures, although there has been some institutional creation. The policy is within the portfolio of a vice mayor supported by city departments and a cross-departmental group of officials.

However there has been an innovative piece of institutional design in the creation of the Integration Council Copenhagen, was first established following a recommendation of the 1999 Danish Integration Act. This low legacy institution is an elected body elected from 'migrants' and 'descendants from migrants' in the city of Copenhagen. The membership is proportionate to the different national origins of Copenhagen's non-Danish community. The Council have no formal decision making capacity as such, but have been created by Copenhagen City Council to advise on all policy related to the successful integration of the migrant population of Copenhagen.

CIC gets its authorisation initially from the Integration Act 2005 (Consolidation of the act on Integration of Aliens in Denmark 2005, No 839, September 2005) administered by the Danish Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs. In Part 8 of the Integration Act it states that a local council 'may set up an integration council' (2005: 14). Such a council is permitted to: 'give advisory opinions on the general effort of integration in the municipality and the introduction programmes offered by the local council. The opinions are made public' (2005: 14). In the case of Copenhagen, the City already had an existing council set up from the previous Integration of Aliens Act (1999). However, following the 2005 act they chose to elect rather than appoint members to the council. Therefore, although the idea of an Integration Council is authorised through the Danish Government, the decision to establish one in Copenhagen was authorised by the city council. Under the provision of the 2005 Act, Copenhagen City Council maintains the right to not renew the CIC franchise for the 2009 elections. Additionally they may also retain the CIC but revert to an appointed selection process.

In revising the form of the Council, the lead official from the city council was asked develop a way of directly electing migrants to the 15 migrant representative seats. The official worked with other cities developing direct elections and used census data to establish an electorate of migrants and descendants from migrants. In March 2005 elections there was a 13.7 turn out. The local press were highly critical of the turnout with the headline: 'Integration Council Vote Flops' (Copenhagen Post 2006). Publications since have been sceptical about the future of the Integration Council:

'It seems that the Integration Council itself is not integrated into the political system. Politicians don't seem to have a very high regard for its opinions, and at the ground level, its members only represent 13.7% of the ethnic minority population. Many of the people who did not vote chose not to do so with good reason. In reality, the Integration Council as it currently functions, does not address the problems of integration or the people experiencing these problems at all' (Enggaard Olsen and Whelan 2006: 9)

The focus from politicians and commentators is on the lack of mandate from the turnout, however little or no attention is directed at the other eleven places on the

board – the appointed. With the election of migrants there was a transparent process of how candidates were elected to board places. For the remainder of the seats certain organisations were requested to nominate people from trade unions, from industrial employers, from schools, sports clubs and social housing. The remaining three places were individuals on the initial integration council (1999-2004) for their ‘expertise’. Paradoxically, it seems the act of an election opens up the Integration Council to greater democratic scrutiny than any appointed equivalent.

## **Low legacy institutions or traditional public governance?**

We now explore whether and to what extent each city has established low legacy institutions in line with our expectations of network governance – that they are self-organising, have policy autonomy, and are metagoverned.

### ***Self-regulating?***

We now turn to discuss the freedom for these networks to choose their design. The SPR is the closest to a completely free design. There is an expectation that no politicians or Rotterdam officials are part of the board as this would limit its independence. In the case of the SPR there was considerable agency accorded to the chair in Pieter Winsemius as a respected former politician. Similarly in the WMSPARS case, the position of the director who also chaired the national consortium argued the new model with a split between operational and strategic board, the role of a politician as chair and a broad plurality of members was most appropriate. In this case there is a strong sense of what a partnership looked like – that it would contain a certain variety of sectors. Less explicit is whether individuals were selected or organisations nominate. More likely is this is a rather ad hoc process and largely self selecting. Where there is concern for protocol however is in the choice of the two designated refugee places who are ‘elected’ through regional refugee forums. The partnership director spoke with great pride of being able to have ‘consumers’ on the board. In contrast for the Integration Council, a proportion of the design was prescribed in the integration legislation, with requirements that there be migrant representatives that reside in the city and also representation from a defined list of organisations. However, the process that Copenhagen and other authorities perused of direct election of migrant seats was at the discretion of city politicians.

### ***Separate from representative democratic government?***

We now turn to discuss whether their decisions are made autonomous from government. To begin, none of the three low legacy institutions are decision-making bodies. Instead they are advisory or coordinating bodies. That said, they clearly have differing degrees of autonomy in terms of how they received by political authorities. In the case of SPR, they have little or no budget of their own but potentially have the ear of Rotterdam’s most senior politicians. Their composition is such as to remain completely independent with no officials or politicians. In contrast WMSPARS are broadly autonomous from local government but such is their funding arrangement with the Home Office, their activities are highly dependent on achieving centrally set performance indicators and delivering certain strategies, for example a requirement that all regional consortia publish an integration strategy. So although their composition is autonomous from government, their activities are broadly not. The

Integration Council is free to choose its own agendas, to discuss or scrutinise certain aspects of current policy. In that sense the Integration Council operates autonomous from representative government, however it can only make recommendations and the Council committee and deputy mayor for integration can choose whether or not to listen or adopt.

### ***Metagoverned?***

Finally we turn to the position of politicians in these low legacy institutions. In the case of the SPR the politicians remain on the outside. They have no control over what the SPR does, champions or recommends other than the power to stop its funding and disband the body. In the case of WMSPARS it was deemed appropriate to not only have a politician on the board but to chair the board to give kudos. The politician in question was first nominated by his local authority of Coventry to the West Midlands Local Government Association who then nominated him for the WMSPARS role. In the case of the Integration Council, there are no politicians on the board, although in a sense 15 on the board are directly elected and therefore politician. However, it is the City of Copenhagen politicians who decide whether any recommendations are adopted and have the ability to disband the council at the end of their four year term as integration councils are now voluntary in Danish law.

## **Conclusion**

If we took the network governance literature at face value we would assume that novel policy problems are typically dealt with through autonomous low legacy institutions metagoverned by politicians. The case of migrant policy in three European cities reveals a more complex pattern. In each city we find low legacy institutions, but they differ in the extent of their self-regulation, autonomy from elected politicians and level of external metagovernance.

Of the institutional designs in the three cities, Copenhagen's looks most like representative democracy working through traditional public administration. The elected politician has responsibility for the policy and executes it through his officials. The advisory council is just that – a sounding board for city government. Birmingham looks the most like a network governance solution, with a low legacy institution – WMSPARS – having executive responsibility for the policy, low political involvement but also limited metagovernance. Rotterdam is somewhere between these two cases. It has elements of institutional designs expected from network governance but also a clear link to elected politicians and city council departments.

So we conclude that network governance is applied differentially across these three cities. It is not a universal phenomenon. Representative government and city council bureaucracies still have a role to play. Olsen (2005) recently argued that 'maybe it is time to rediscover bureaucracy'. He was making the point that scholars of public administration should reconsider the value of bureaucracy as part of a repertoire of institutional designs available for public administrators. Our research – albeit from a limited empirical base – suggests that the case for network governance has been overstated, and that bureaucratic solutions are alive and well. Legacy systems form part of the design repertoire, and low legacy institutions may be added to them as a patch to overcome weaknesses – as in the case of Copenhagen's integration council.

But our evidence does not point to the replacement of legacy systems by low legacy institutions other than in the case of Birmingham.

Our study reinforces the contingent position taken by Kriesi et al (2006) and discussed earlier in this paper. However we think it is important to explain the observations we present, and to develop a theoretical position rather than just leaving the discussion at the level of contingencies with their unspecified causal relationships. The elaboration of this position is beyond the scope of this paper. However our working hypothesis is that the democratic milieu of each country – the traditions and norms of societal governance and democracy – shape the institutional response to new policy challenges. The national context, then, provides a set of acceptable institutional designs. In England, the consequences of almost three decades of constant governmental reform combined with a pragmatic approach to constitutional issues have created the conditions in which network governance can flourish. In Denmark, with its strong tradition of civic associationalism and relatively small scale, elected politicians and public bureaux remain the conventional solution. The Netherlands has a longstanding tradition of negotiated political solutions, and thus representative democracy is still a core mechanism but supplemented with aspects of network governance. These explanations will be elaborated and further explored as our research proceeds.

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