Growing Pains

How a Dutch Cross-Agency Team Took on
Illegal Marijuana Production in Residential Areas

Educator Guide

SANDERIJN CELS, JORRIT DE JONG, MARTIJN GROENLEER

Overview

This Educator Guide is designed to assist instructors in teaching this case to students and practitioners. It is based on case pedagogy, which invites participants to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist(s) of the case and imagine how they would respond to the circumstances. Participants should read the teaching case in advance and identify key issues as a preliminary step toward meeting the learning objectives. Instructors may then use the time in the classroom to guide participants in exploring the issues and examining the challenges in the case; to introduce key concepts, tools, and frameworks; and to assist participants in applying their learning to their own environments and challenges.

This guide includes learning objectives, a synopsis, key questions, a roadmap for discussion, and appendices with some additional pedagogical information and theoretical applications. The roadmap and appendices are offered to initiate meaningful conversation but are by no means the only way to teach the case. Each educator or facilitator should feel free to design their own teaching plans; both the structure and the time allotted for each component are suggestions.

Learning Objectives

The aims of the case "Growing Pains: How a Dutch Cross-agency Team Took on Illegal Marijuana Production in Residential Areas" are to help students and municipal leaders:

- o Engage in cross-sectoral activity (i.e., tackle an issue bigger than any one silo can manage).
- o Take a strategic approach to "problem selection." (There are multiple problems within a given issue, but you are trying to focus on one tightly defined issue in which you can make a difference.)
- o Select a team across boundaries or sectors.
- o Understand the dynamics of multiple "accountability relationships" (not just to the "silo" or parent organization from which you have come, but to your collaborators at the table).

    o   Help future collaborations become aware of the various group dynamics they can expect when taking cross-boundary problem-solving to scale.

Case Synopsis

In June 2015, a task force convened in the Netherlands to consider cross-sectoral approaches to fighting organized crime in the south of the country, particularly in the homegrown marijuana industry. From that larger group, five professional managers and officials were tasked with devising an approach to target and break up criminal drug gangs that paid or coerced residents in beleaguered neighborhoods to grow pot in back rooms or attics. These activities put a huge strain on the power supply and greatly increased the risk of fire.

The five men did not know each other and came from different organizations and professional backgrounds with their own training and ideas: the police, the regional utility company, the national tax bureau, the mayor's office in nearby Breda, and the public prosecutor's office. A police officer would not see the problem, or the solution, in the same way as a utility company manager. How would the five manage to work together—not just devise an approach, but return to their organizations and convince their bosses and colleagues this could work? Not all of the team were based in the City of Breda, but Breda, under the auspices of Mayor Paul Depla, would serve as the first trial ground to identify a neighborhood and carry out an operation to see if the new cross-sectoral approach could work.

Key Questions

1. How would you define the problem?
2. Was this the right team for the job?
3. What made it difficult for the team to take on this challenge?
4. What was effective about the way accountability was structured? What could have been better?

Roadmap for Discussion

Introduction (3-10 minutes): Briefly state the goal of the session in reference to the case, cite specific major conflicts facing the protagonist, and foreshadow broader learning objectives.

Exploration (15-20 minutes): Use class discussion, "buzz groups," and board work to examine the issues and options confronting the protagonists.

Diagnosis (30-45 minutes): Introduce key concepts, frameworks, and tools to help participants pinpoint possible solutions to major conflicts in the case.

Application (15 minutes, optional): Ask participants to relate the concepts and frameworks to their own organizations' challenges.

Wrap-Up and Takeaways (15 minutes): Review the learning objectives and discuss insights most relevant to your organizations' challenges.

Introduction
Take a few minutes to introduce the case and the basic thrust of the story (i.e., top officials convene a task force from which one small cross-agency team will tackle a highly specific problem), while introducing key themes: team selection, problem definition, accountability challenges, etc.

Exploration
- *What was the problem that the "authorizers" (the top officials convening the task force and creating small teams) wanted the team to solve?*
- *How did the team end up defining the problem, and why?*
- *What was the new approach they developed and tested? What was novel about it?*

Diagnosis
Take a straw poll (Yes/No) of participants:
- *In your opinion, was the team effective?*
Note the reasons (why/why not) on the board.

Generally, the pattern that emerges from the board-work is a glass half-full/half-empty scenario: There is a range between "Yes, they managed to accomplish *something*" to "But did they address organized crime? No." The problem is reduced from "organized crime" to "tackling weed" to "fire risk."

Now the question for three actors (the authorities initiating the task force, the team, and other stakeholders) is:
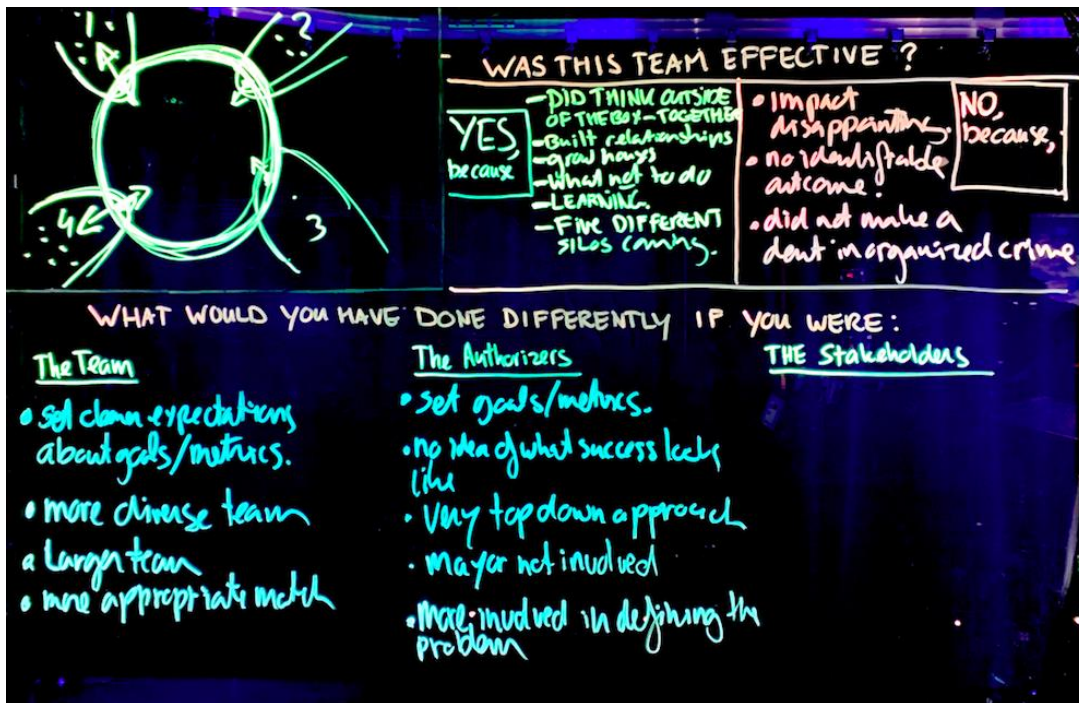- *Who could have done what, when, and how to have made the project more effective?*
Note answers on board in three columns.

Ask the participants:
- *What would you have done if you were one of these three parties?*

Sample board work from a teaching session:

Application (optional)

Ask participants to consider a problem they are facing and approaches that their city may learn from this case. (See Appendix 1 for the "Top 3 Common Challenges of Collaborative Governance.")

1. *What would success look like in your collaborative effort?*
2. *How open or closed is the current problem definition?*
3. *Who are important participants to have on the core team? The outer circle? Why?*
4. *What can you do to set up the team for success?*

Wrap-up and Takeaways

Lessons from this session can be found on a two-page handout in Appendix 2, "Setting a Cross-Boundary Team Up for Success." The graphic in the handout offers one way to visualize the process of cross boundary collaboration. You may use these slides to support a discussion of how cross boundary teams are formed and how relationships can develop between the core team, the outer circle, and the authorizers.

Suggested Reading/Additional Frameworks

Waardenburg, M., Groenleer, M., de Jong, J., and Keijser, B., "Paradoxes of Collaborative Governance: Investigating the Real-life Dynamics of Multi-agency Collaboration Using a Quasi-experimental Action-research Approach," *Public Management Review* 22, no. 3 (May 2019): 386-407 https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1599056.

Waardenburg, M., Groenleer, M., and de Jong, J., "Designing Environments for Experimentation, Learning and Innovation in Public Policy and Governance: Insights from the Organized Crime Field Lab," *Policy & Politics* 48, no.1 (Jan 2020): 67-87 https://doi.org/10.1332/030557319X15586040837640.

Appendices

Appendix 1   "Top Three Challenges of Collaborative Governance"

Top 3 Common Challenges of Collaborative Governance

1. Substantive Problem-Solving Challenges
   - Agreeing on the problem definition and possible solutions
   - Developing a coherent and effective collaborative approach

2. Accountability Challenges
   - Developing a commitment to the collaboration
   - Dealing with competing commitments between collaboration and own organization

3. Team Design and Management Challenges
   - Trusting and understanding each other
   - Figuring out how to talk, decide and work together

Groenleer, M., J. De Jong, M. Waardenburg and B. Keijser
"Paradoxes in Collaborative Governance,"
Public Management Review (May, 2019)

Appendix 2   Two-page handout: "Setting a Cross-Boundary Team Up for Success"

The Need for a Team
Managing a collaborative team that is developing a new approach for tackling a problem is a difficult enterprise, because the capacity and support to do the work come from multiple organizations, each with its own perspective, interests, and ways of working.

In order to create alignment and move the work forward, representatives of the most involved organizations should form collaborative teams. The questions are how to select team members, assign roles and responsibilities, and how to position them to be most effective.

Two Types of Work
The team is charged with two kinds of work: thinking and acting.

The thinking part includes: 1) analyzing the problem and reconciling its various definitions; 2) developing a collaborative "Theory of Change" that all parties can support; and 3) examining the stakeholder environment and devising a strategic approach to implementation.

The acting part of the work includes: 1) convening and communicating to the right people, in the right way, at the right time; 2) producing documents that explain substance and process and present both conclusions of the problem analysis and choices for the new approach; and 3) designing and executing the new approach and/or helping others execute it.

The work does not always proceed in a linear way; emphasis may shift between the thinking and acting parts.
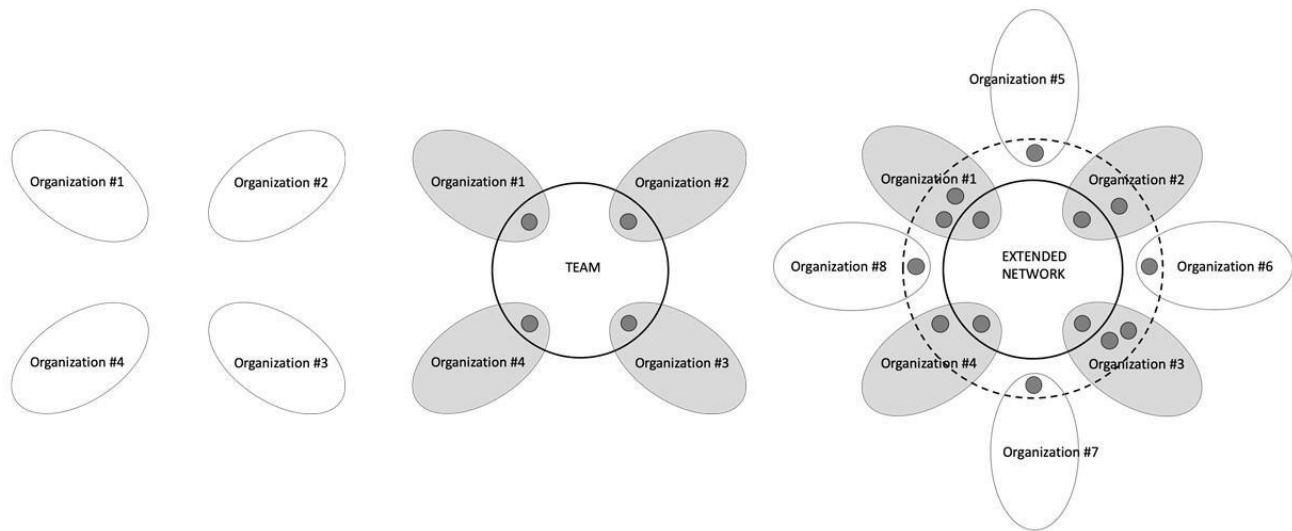

Selection of the Team
Team members may be selected based on the following considerations: 1) They represent organizations that are critical to the collaborative effort; and 2) They have specific expertise, skills, connections, or other assets that are critical to analysis, design, or execution.

Because the work of the collaboration changes over time, the composition of the team may change as well. For example, when a team learns more about the problem and identifies a different angle to approach it, the types of expertise or institutional representation needed may change.

The chicken and egg problem in collaborative governance lies in the following question: Should the team define the problem, or should the problem define the team? One way to approach this dilemma is to be tentative in defining the problem, and be explicit up front that problem definition and team composition may change along the way.

Another way to think about it is that not all relevant organizations must be represented on the core team. A larger, outer circle exists that includes a broader set of stakeholders. Part of the responsibility of the core team is to maintain close communications with individuals and organizations in the outer circle.

The following graphic depicts how the core team relates to the outer circle, or extended network:

Different organizations have different perspectives and interests.

A cross-boundary collaboration emerges and organizations designate a member to the team.

The team identifies and connects with other people in their own organization and in other organizations not on the team. The outer circle is the extended network of stakeholders.

What do teams need?

Cross-boundary collaboration is demanding work that requires team members to step outside of their comfort zone. The team has neither the luxury (nor the burden!) of a stable, hierarchical organization with a clear mission and mandate. Teams therefore need "authorizers" or "sponsors" who give them a license to innovate and support them as they embrace the ambiguity and uncertainty associated with innovation in a collaborative setting.

As teams develop and test new ways of approaching the problem, they are likely to fail or get stuck. Authorizers can make teams more comfortable with uncertainty, risk, and failure. They can also validate that without experimentation, there is no learning; and without learning, there is no real progress.

Teams also need to be held accountable for their work and should meet with authorizers regularly to discuss progress, reflect on lessons learned, challenge assumptions, motivate further creative thinking, strategize to move the work along, and set clear expectations and milestones for the short and medium term. Teams also need their authorizers to help navigate their larger authorizing environment, which is typically fragmented and complicated.

Finally, teams benefit from clear assignments of roles and responsibilities within the team, even if the team structure is subject to change. For example, having a designated team leader can be very helpful in managing the process and making sure people do what they agreed to do. Other tasks may include collecting data and information for the problem analysis, organizing a convening of the outer circle, or preparing a report for the authorizers.

Discussing the aspects highlighted in this memo in an early stage and reflecting on the process at various times during the process is strongly encouraged.