Local social policy and accessible social service delivery -

A study of the relationship between local governments and private nonprofit organisations

Joris De Corte

Promotor: Prof. Dr. M. Bouverne-De Bie
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Proefschrift ingediend tot het behalen van de academische graad van
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

This doctoral dissertation has a particular interest in the emergence of interorganisational collaboration, or joined-up working, within the field of the social work practice (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, & Vandenbroeck, 2014). This interest has been primarily related to the creation of interorganisational networks through which private welfare organisations[1] and the public sector collaborate with the objective of (re)organising welfare provision for citizens within the context of the welfare state (Klijn, 2008). Moreover, we focus on the participation of social work in the formation of so-called 'bottom-up' networks at the local level (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003). In essence, these networks are not mandated by law but mainly arise due to the engagement of worried field workers or managers who are directly confronted within their own institution or organisation with these complex and sometimes distressing situations of groups of citizens that were not yet, or no longer, adequately served by regular welfare provision (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Kenis & Provan, 2009).

The central question that is advanced in this doctoral dissertation could be formulated in the following way: "*Are bottom-up networks levers for social work to tackle social exclusion within society by combining a micro-and macro-level perspective on social problems?*"

This study on the functioning of these bottom-up networks could be situated against the background of two concrete topics that are currently of central concern within social work scholarship: The observed levels of social exclusion within the context of the post-war welfare state, and the way in which social work positions itself to perform a role as a mediator between the public sphere of government and the private sphere of individuals and families. These themes will be further elaborated in the next paragraphs.

1 In the remainder of this introduction we will use the term private welfare organisations, which has been considered as an equivalent of other terms such as private nonprofit organisations, private welfare organisations, third sector organisations, etc.

1.1.1 About social exclusion within the evolving welfare state …

Many scholars have referred to the levels of social exclusion and societal inequality in contemporary welfare states (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Williams, 1999; Elchardus, Marx, & Pelleriaux, 2003; Deleeck & Cantillon, 2008; Biesta, 2011). This outcome has been attributed to the fact that citizens' access to welfare services has been severely hampered by a number of factors (Chevannes, 2002; Sannen, 2003). Besides thresholds at the demand-side of the individual or at the level of the interaction between client and care taker, citizens might also encounter substantial obstacles at the supply-side of welfare provision (Ellis, Davis, & Rummery, 1999; Rummery & Glendinning, 2000; Sannen, 2003; Piessens & Lauwers, 2008).

The obstacles on the supply-side latter, which are of particular relevance for this dissertation, could then be related to the perpetuation of the historically grown fragmentation of care in separate silos or containers (Allen & Sprigings, 2001; Allen, 2003; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010). This bifurcation gave rise to the development of relatively autonomous policy domains, such as 'housing', 'disability care', 'mental health care', etc., which became subject to different regulations that were not necessarily complementary to one another. Welfare organisations that became active within these sectors gradually adopted proper admission policies on which they relied for advancing criteria to delineate the target population they aimed to serve. As a result, large groups of citizens faced a risk of falling through the cracks in welfare provision (Dwyer, Bowpitt, Sundin, & Weinstein, 2015). Moreover, as citizens are confronted with complex or so-called 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973), which cut across service areas and policy domains, the ability to reach out and engage with these vulnerable segments of the population might further erode as well (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011).

The emergence of a so-called 'rest group' of citizens who were not yet (or no longer) adequately served by regular welfare provision was also reinforced due to the emphasis within governmental policies on self-reliance and self-responsibility of individuals. In many Western societies, this was reflected in the gradual transition of the traditional welfare state into an activating welfare state (Giddens, 1998; Leggett, 2004). Hence, instead of just redistributing resources in times of crisis, the aim was to become a springboard for citizens by offering renewed opportunities to make the most of their abilities, to (re)empower them to participate in society to prevent citizens ending up in a stubborn situation of dependency upon the welfare system

(Commission on Social Justice, 1994; Giddens, 1998; Ferguson, 2004; Marthinsen & Skjefstad, 2011; Adams, 2012). As such, the acquisition of waged work was seen as a durable way out of poverty and dependency (Giddens, 1998; Barrientos & Powell, 2004).

Nevertheless, it has been equally argued that specific welfare recipients have been pushed aside or became more vulnerable to controlling or punitive measures in the context of this activating welfare state, as they might lack the proper resources or skills to become productive citizens within the scope of self-responsibility and self-governance (Clarke, 2005; Kessl, 2009; Welbourne, 2011).

> "*… the reliance on one's own means and on self-help capacities is an important reference point in gaining adult independence and in breaking cycles of dependency, including the dependency on social service support to which many clients were condemned. But it is easy to forget that mutual dependency is a basic condition of human existence, is something that has grown exponentially with the advance of the division of labor and the differentiation of production steps and communication chains, and that the skills in forming positive forms of dependency are indispensable attributes of human capabilities, in conjunction with the provision of the corresponding resources that such dependency necessitates*" (Lorenz 2014:11-12).

In sum, we might then substantiate the abovementioned claims about levels of social exclusion in contemporary Western societies by referring to the perceived incapacity of the welfare state and its original institutions to reach out to particular segments of the population on the one hand, and by pointing to the evolved ambitions of these welfare states and growing expectations with regard to capacities and behaviour of citizens and welfare recipients on the other.

1.1.2 … and determining the role of social work

From a historical perspective on the development of the post-war welfare states throughout Western Europe, the social work profession acquired a relatively autonomous position as a mediator between the public sphere and the private sphere of individuals and families (Lorenz, 2008). This implies that social work inherently carries a double mandate of both care and control, and has to negotiate the relationship through which private needs and wants could be transformed into issues of public concern (Jordan & Parton, 2004). Nevertheless, it has been repeatedly

argued that we might observe a 'de-politicisation' of social work (Specht & Courtney, 1995; Haynes & Mickelson, 1997; Marston & McDonald, 2012) that has been associated with the rise of managerialism (Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Lorenz, 2005) and led to a more individualistic understanding of social relationships (Dominelli, 2007; Lorenz, 2008; Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010). As such, it has been stated that social workers also face pressure to develop a more unilateral focus on the individual treatment of citizens through an efficient use of resources. This might have led to social workers developing a preference for pre-structured outcomes instead of performing a political role by helping to realise social reforms, or to define the social problems around which they are active (Lorenz, 2005; O'Brien, 2011; Hermans, 2013).

Therefore, we acknowledge the need for social work, as a social profession, to maintain a strong engagement in raising a so-called 'new social question' (Rosanvallon, 1995) and to see each professional interaction or contact as an opportunity to make a social contract (Lorenz, 2014). This necessitates a constant reconsideration of how to establish social solidarity by helping to construct the 'social sphere', as a mediator between the public sphere of government and the private sphere of individuals and families (Lorenz, 2008; Driessens & Geldof, 2009; Bouverne-De Bie, 2014). Hence, in order to ensure prevent that it is predominantly used in the development of coping strategies, which will ultimately reinforce the drivers of the abovementioned evolutions, social work must not only act via concrete welfare interventions but must also display a continuous engagement to remain sensitive for the complexity of social problems (Roose, Roets, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012) and for helping to realise social reforms through revised social policy priorities at the macro-level (Hare, 2004; Marston & McDonald, 2012; Hermans, 2013; Lorenz, 2014).

Nonetheless, the role of social work in helping to counterbalance social exclusion within the context of the contemporary welfare state can, however, only be studied by analysing the way in which it constructs the concrete practices in which it is involved as a social profession (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000). Therefore, this doctoral dissertation has a well-delineated focus on the emergence of interorganisational collaboration, or joined-up working, as outlined before. This gives rise to the formulation of two main research questions that will be outlined in the next section.

1.2 Research questions

As outlined above, we begin with the acknowledgement that networks, and especially the bottom-up ones under study here, are valuable instruments for coping with levels of social exclusion within the context of the welfare state. A first important issue that could, however, be raised, relates to the relatively 'vulnerable' character of these bottom-up networks (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Kenis & Provan, 2009).

This is especially the case with regard to the need for establishing a relatively stable or supporting environment to guarantee the enduring commitment of its members to become, and to remain, involved by investing scarce organisational resources (e.g. time, FTE, monies, etc.) on behalf of these networks (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). This could also be related to the fact that networks are generally defined as 'structures of interdependence involving multiple organisations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of others in some larger hierarchical arrangement' (O'Toole, 1997). This referral to horizontal and non-hierarchical relations implies that networks, and especially bottom-up ones, consist of interdependent but still operationally autonomous actors, who primarily interact on a voluntary basis (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009).

As bottom-up networks could be used to identify designate and compensate perceived shortfalls of the welfare state with regard to welfare provision to citizens, we agree it is important to enhance knowledge about the broader socio-political and institutional contexts of the welfare state in which these bottom-up networks might arise and become operational at the local level (Provan & Milward, 1995; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007; Klijn, 2008; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi 2009). This leads to the formulation of the first main research question that is of central concern for this doctoral dissertation:

> RQ1 - *Which are factors that could hamper or foster the emergence of local bottom-up networks within the context of the welfare state*?

Secondly, we agree that the topic of network effectiveness has been too often neglected (Bardach, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007) and that the notion of 'joint work' should not necessarily imply 'good' work (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets et al.,

2014). Therefore, we must not only pay attention to the breeding ground for these bottom-up networks to occur and survive, but must also provide a critical assessment of the actual outcomes that are produced once they have become operational.

Still, there appeared to be opposing views about how to perform this evaluation because various stakeholders might lay a claim to the network (Klijn, 2007). After all, there could be a question of for whom the network is effective (Provan & Kenis, 2007), as networks are considered as goal-oriented structures, which implies that participants aim to realise both their organisational objectives as well as commonly defined goals (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007).

This doctoral dissertation agrees to consider network effectiveness as a multidimensional variable (Provan & Milward, 2001; Provan & Kenis, 2007; Klijn, 2007; Cepiku, 2013) that could be assessed at different, but interdependent, levels of analysis. For the purpose of this study, we might then refer to a rather ideal-typical position in which a distinction is made between effectiveness at the organisational level and at the community level.

At the organisational level, network effectiveness is then primarily about the benefits for each organisation that (voluntarily) invests some of its time and resources on behalf of a shared objective. This implies that network actors are at least party driven by a self-interest to acquire or secure additional resources (monies, expertise, etc.), to reduce their organisational costs or to ameliorate their status as a reliable and legitimate partner (Provan & Milward, 2001).

At the community level, however, networks are primarily considered as service delivering vehicles that provide value to local communities and individual citizens in ways that could have not been achieved through uncoordinated provision of services by fragmented and fully autonomous agencies (Provan & Milward, 1995; Provan & Milward, 2001; Huxham, 2003).

Nevertheless, this evaluation of network effectiveness at the community level could be conducted from differing perspectives as well. This is because multiple criteria could be used to rely on to perform this evaluation. As such, we agree that any decision about these criteria is indeed a normative decision as there is no scientific way to judge whether one criterion is ‘better’ than another in assessing the effectiveness of the network (Kenis & Provan, 2009). In this doctoral dissertation, we

make a distinction between an instrumental logic and a client-centred approach to distil these criteria.

From an instrumental logic, the focus is put on the efficient use of scarce resources, which relate to ideas about managerialism, performance measurement and the development of a qualitative but also pre-structured supply (McGuire, 2002; Rodriguez, Langley, Beland, & Denis, 2007; McGuire & Agranoff, 2011; Roets et al., 2014). Although all network members could act efficiently and provide high-performance services themselves, there might still be groups that are left unserved by the totality of network members (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007). From a client-centred logic, it is therefore required acknowledged to 'better' take into account the perspectives, needs and concerns of those being served and targeted by the network (see for example Roets, Dean, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2014) with the aim of coping with the complex and often unpredictable character of demands made by citizens (Roose & De Bie, 2003; Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; Roets et al., 2014).

In sum, whereas the effectiveness at the community level is of particular relevance for a doctoral dissertation that is conducted in the field of social work, the focus on the actual outcomes that are produced for clients might be hampered in a two-fold way: There is the field of tension between effectiveness at the community level and at the organisational level, but also a tension between an instrumental and a client-centred perspective to distil concrete criteria to perform the evaluation. This gives rise to the formulation of a second main research question:

> RQ2 – *What kind of accessibility is constructed for citizens via bottom-up networks at the local level?*

1.3 An interdisciplinary approach for studying networks

The process of developing the research questions, as outlined in the previous section, was strongly inspired by a review of (inter)national literature within two separate scientific disciplines, social work and public administration, which have displayed a similar interest in the topic of networks as a means to organise welfare provision within the welfare state. This is equally reflected by the distinct bulks of literature on the structure, functioning and outcomes of networks to which referral was made.

This striving for interdisciplinarity does, however, not appear out of the blue, but instead primarily stems from my personal situation. Having a background as a researcher in the academic field of political sciences and public administration, I was engaged by the former department of social welfare studies[2] of Ghent University in 2011 to carry out a study about the collaboration across sectoral and public-private boundaries through networks at the local level in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. This study, of which the present PhD is the result, did however not start from scratch as I decided in close consultation with my supervisor and co-supervisor to not ignore or deny 'my previous history', but to use it instead as a relevant point of departure for guiding me throughout the research process. Retrospectively, I might now state that we then commenced to stroll down a long and winding road without having clear sight upon the place where we would eventually end up.

Still, we succeeded in unravelling a research agenda based on commonly perceived research gaps with regard to the breeding ground and the outcomes of these bottom-up networks. Hence, in order to further elaborate such an interdisciplinary approach, we dealt with the main research questions, which are definitely of central concern within the field of social work, by making use of conceptual and theoretical frameworks that boast of a much longer tradition within the field of public administration, and that are used throughout multiple phases of the research process (Rosenfield, 1992; Rhoten & Parker, 2004; Aboelela et al., 2007).

With regard to the first question about the broader context in which bottom-up networks might become operational in Flanders, we therefore relied on a typology of public-private relationships (see Kuhnle & Selle, 1990) (article 1) and a theoretical framework of resource dependence theory (see Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) (article 2). These conceptual and theoretical frames enabled us to better understand the nature and dynamics of the relationships between private welfare organisations and the public sector in the context of the welfare state. As such, they provided us valuable information about the contextual factors that could hamper (or foster) the formation and functioning of additional bottom-up networks at the local level in Flanders.

[2] In 2015 the Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy replaced the former Department of Social Welfare Studies at Ghent University.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that we hereby made a pragmatic but also well-considered choice to make use of a previous quantitative study in which I was involved as a researcher.[3] In short, these quantitative data were derived from a large-N survey in which 255 managers of urban private welfare organisations were questioned about the roles their organisations performed within the context of the so-called third-party government regime in Belgium, and about their relationships with the public sector at different governmental levels (Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Anheier, 2005; Defourney and Pestoff, 2008; Verschuere, 2014). This resulted in two previously published articles about the role of these private welfare organisations in delivering publicly funded social services to citizens at the central level (De Corte & Verschuere, 2014a), and about the more expressive 'advocacy' role of these private welfare actors with regard to the development of social policies as well (Verschuere & De Corte, 2015).

Nevertheless, this study appeared to contain relevant, but until then non-used information, about the characteristics and dynamics of this public-private relationship at the local governmental level in Flanders. As such, this quantitative dataset was further explored and gave rise to development of two new articles, which eventually served as the first (De Corte & Verschuere, 2014b) and second article (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014) of the present doctoral dissertation.

With regard to the second research question about the outcomes for citizens of these local bottom-up networks for welfare provision, we became inspired by the enormous amount of (inter)national literature that was steadily produced since the late 1990s on the shift from government to governance as a new leading paradigm within public administration scholarship (Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998; Klijn, 2008), and about the structure, functioning and outcomes of these networks through which this shift was epitomised in concrete practices (De Rynck, 2002; Bouckaert, Legrain, & Verhoest, 2003; Mandell & Keast, 2008). As such, we made referral to the debates around the topics of collaborative advantage and network effectiveness (see article 3) and the distinct typologies to characterise networks (see article 4) (Agranoff, 2007; Klijn, 2008; Mandell & Keast, 2008; Isset, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011).

[3] This was a research project conducted at the department of Business Administration and Public Administration of the University College Ghent.

Moreover, this interdisciplinary character will also be reflected in our final article (see article 5) in which we highlight the need for a framework, or value basis, for steering network interactions as a necessary precondition for social work to use these bottom-up networks as real levers to deal with social exclusion (also see initial problem statement).

As a result, this doctoral dissertation not only aims to answer some particular research questions about the functioning, breeding ground and outcomes of networks as a relevant topic within the field of social work, but equally has the ambition to highlight the necessity for social work, being my new 'home base', to not cling to its own '(un)certainties' and to have the audacity to leave the beaten tracks.

This will equally apply in the reverse direction, as logics that are at the heart of public administration scholarship could and should be challenged as well to advance the understanding of network issues in the public sector context (Isset, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011). In the discussion section, we will further elaborate on three concrete topics that are at the heart of public administration scholarship on networks. This will be done by focusing on the premises from a governmental perspective about the roles of private welfare actors, the tendency towards the blurring of boundaries between the public and private sectors due to a shift to governance, and the way through which effectiveness of these networks is evaluated.

Hence, it must be clear that the present doctoral dissertation is not so much about making comparisons between 'good' and 'bad' approaches that should be present in one or another field of study, but aims more to provide fertile ground for initiating a further 'dialogue' between separate but also interdependent scientific disciplines around this particular topic of networks for welfare provision.

1.4 Research context

In order to further refine the two main research questions at the heart of this doctoral dissertation, we must take a closer look at the welfare state in Belgium as the research context in which these questions will be analysed. More specifically, we will take the law on Public Centres for Social Welfare (1976) as a point of departure and outline its main objectives.

1.4.1 About the (federal) PCSW-law and the (Flemish) Decree on Local Social Policy

The PCSW-law of 1976 was the result of long-lasting discussions about defining the level of public responsibility with regard to welfare provision for citizens within the context of the post-war welfare state (Senaeve, 1977). Nonetheless, it must be considered as a turning point with regard to the professionalisation of social service delivery and the widening of the scope from mere poverty reduction by just providing material or financial assistance, to the ambition of ensuring the (psychosocial) wellbeing of the entire population as well (Notredame, 1997).

The PSCW-law indicated that every single Belgian municipality must be served by a newly established Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW). In essence, the PCSWs performed a double role at the local level. On the one hand, they are considered as a local government that must ensure a right to social welfare for every individual citizen. This implies that there are two public authorities at the local level in Belgium. Whereas the functioning of the city council, which is democratically elected every six years, covers the totality of competencies transferred to local authorities, the PCSW council, which is indirectly democratically legitimised as its members are appointed by the city council, had a far more delineated task with regard to welfare issues at the local level. In order to perform these tasks, the PCSWs enjoyed a substantial degree of operational autonomy but in the end it was the city council that maintained the final word about the yearly budget of the PCSW[4] (De Rynck & Wayenberg, 2013).

On the other hand, the PCSW-law equally provided the opportunity for these PCSWs to create an additional supply (e.g. hospitals, facilities for elderly care or child care, shelters for homeless people, etc.) if this was considered to be necessary due to locally perceived needs or gaps with regard to welfare provision to citizens. As such, the PCSWs are also considered as a public welfare organisation that became operational, alongside the range of private welfare organisations that already existed,

[4] In 2014, the regional Flemish government decided that the PCSWs should be integrated in the administrative apparatus of their respective municipalities by 2019 (Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014). This implies that the 'bipolar' system with two different public actors (PCSW and local government) will be changed into a system in which there will be only one public actor (local government) left at the local level in Belgium from 2019 onwards. Nevertheless, even within this new context, the question of how to ensure the right to social welfare will remain a relevant one and will urge local governments to take up public responsibility for this task.

at the primary line of care, and were directly accessible for citizens that were confronted with a material or immaterial problem (Senaeve, 1977).

As already mentioned above, the relevance of the PCSW-law relates to the introduction of a right to social welfare to which society is bound. The latter implies that citizens have a legally ensured lever within the context of the welfare state in Belgium to launch every single demand for help, and to make an appeal upon the use of societal resources to solve welfare-related problems (Bouverne-De Bie, 2007). This could be related to a wide variety of needs, including for example a lack of material means, an inadequate housing situation, or the need for counselling due to relational or psycho-social problems. This social right could, however, only be enforced vis-à-vis the public sector and not with regard to the welfare support provided by private welfare sector (Senaeve, 1977). Therefore, the PCSWs, which performed a double role as being a public authority at the local level but also as a public provider of welfare services, obtained a key role in 'ensuring' this right to social welfare. Nonetheless, it has been equally argued that the PCSW-law equally contains an 'open invitation' (Vranken, 2005) for PCSWs to enhance their co-operation with the wide range of private welfare organisations that are already active within their respective municipalities to fill service gaps and find adjustment around topics of local importance (Notredame, 1997).

More recently, the need for intensifying the collaboration between welfare actors at the local scale was equally reaffirmed by the Decree on Social Policy (2003). This decree was launched by the regional Flemish government with the aim of further enforcing the right to social welfare by urging local governments and PCSWs to foster and coordinate their cooperation with private welfare actors at the operational level of social service delivery and at the strategic level of social policy development (De Rynck, 2002). The creation of networks around social problems or 'wicked' issues of local importance (e.g. homelessness, child care, etc.) was explicitly put forward as a means to realise this.

This might then allow us to distil two key elements that are of particular importance for the present doctoral dissertation. On the one hand, we argue that the introduction of a right to social welfare provides a frame of reference on which the PCSWs could rely, either when working individually or when working with other actors through networks to organise welfare provision for citizens. This is because the right to social welfare grants citizens with more equal opportunities to launch their demands for

help and urges welfare actors, and the PCSW in particular, to take into account the voices of those being served and targeted when implementing or developing social policies (Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Coussé, Bradt, Roose, & De Bie, 2010). This implies that the perspective of the client is considered as a starting point to initiate a dialogue about what quality of care means for them, which could be reflected in concrete criteria such as the accessibility, comprehensibility, usefulness, affordability or availability of welfare services (Notredame, 1997; Roose & De Bie, 2003; Bouverne-De Bie, 2003). Nevertheless, it must be equally acknowledged that a right to social welfare can never be absolute as societal resources to fulfil social rights are not infinite (Bole, 1991; Raes & Coene, 1995; Evans, 2002; Piessens & Lauwers, 2008). As such, we relate this to the research question (RQ2) about the need for evaluating outcomes for citizens when working through bottom-up networks and the imminent tension between an instrumental logic and a client-centred approach when performing this evaluation (Parmentier, 1994; Hubeau, 1995; Notredame, 1997; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Luyten, 2008).

On the other hand, we might point as well to the plea for enhanced collaboration between PCSWs and private welfare organisations through networks for helping to ensure this right to social welfare. This will be linked to the research question (RQ 1) about the institutional context in which bottom-up might occur, as neither the PCSW law or the decree on local social policy imposed any hard obligations to the PCSW or the private welfare organisations to induce this collaboration and to invest scarce organisational resources on behalf of these networks.

1.4.2 Refining the research questions

Starting from the research context outlined above, we will further refine the initial research questions. Therefore, we will further elaborate on the obstacles and pitfalls that might hamper the ambitions of the PCSW law to enhance levels of collaboration through local networks and to realise a right to social welfare for every individual citizen. This will eventually result in the formulation of four operational research questions that will be dealt with through a series of separate articles. This is also reflected in Figure 1 (see page 33).

With regard to the breeding ground for enhancing the collaboration between the PCSWs and private welfare organisations through bottom-up networks at the local level in Belgium (RQ1), we must primarily point to the historically grown role and position of private welfare organisations in the context of the welfare state and their

position vis-à-vis local governments in particular. In essence, the vast majority of these private welfare organisations had their roots in religiously inspired charity or welfare initiatives directed at the impoverished and pauperised population by the prosperous bourgeoisie. It must, however, be noted that these private welfare actors were gradually enabled to obtain a relative independent position vis-à-vis the public sector, which was reflected in the so-called principle of the liberté subsidée or subsidised autonomy, in providing the lion's share of social service delivery to citizens (Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Defourney & Pestoff, 2008; Verschuere, De Corte, & Vancoppenolle, 2013; Bouverne-De Bie, 2014).

This might be further explained by two evolutions: pillarisation and the principle of subsidiarity. Pillarisation has led to a situation in which ideologically-driven 'pillars' (e.g. catholic, socialist or liberal ones) could develop dense networks of social service delivery from 'cradle to grave' (e.g. in terms of education, mutual insurance companies, trade unions, leisure-time activities, etc.) ever since the end of the 19th century. The intentional policy of subsidiarity, especially of governments and politicians that are ideologically related to these pillars, made it possible to recognise and financially support these private initiatives in the context of the expansion of the welfare state during the 20th century (Huyse, 1987; Deleeck and Cantillon, 2008; Verschuere, 2014; Bouverne-De Bie, 2014). This has led to creation of an economically well-developed private welfare sector that receives up to three quarters of its total revenues from public funding, nowadays largely provided by the regional Flemish government under the so-called 'third-party' government regime (Salamon, 1987; Verschuere et al., 2013; Verschuere, 2014).

Nonetheless, this centralistic style of government, in which private welfare organisations have developed strong ties with the central government, has equally resulted in a weak institutional position of local governments from an administrative point of view (Voets & De Rynck, 2008; Fret, 2012). As a result, the ambition of the PCSW-law, which was reconfirmed by the more recent Decree on Local Social Policy (2004) of the regional Flemish government (De Rynck, 2002), is severely hampered as local governments might have few financial or regulative levers at their disposal to induce the voluntary commitment of private welfare actors to become involved in collaborative endeavours at the local scale as well (De Rynck & Suykens, 2008; Verschuere & De Rynck, 2009).

Hence, as the PCSW-law and the Decree on Local Social Policy do not contain hard obligations or leverage in regard to local authorities or private welfare organisations, we might then wonder about the actual breeding ground for realising the abovementioned ambition of enhancing collaboration between the public and private sectors at the local level in Flanders through bottom-up networks.

As a result, this leads to a first refinement of the first main research question of this PhD, which will be answered via the first article (De Corte & Verschuere, 2014b) and that could be formulated in the following way:

> RQ 1.1 – *What are the degrees of integration between private welfare organisations and governments at the local level in Belgium*?

Furthermore, the ambition to foster the levels of collaboration through the creation of bottom-up networks as an instrument to organise welfare provision to citizens at the local level became equally constrained by another factor. This could be related to the accountability pressure that is exerted towards the publicly funded private welfare organisations. Hence, whereas these private welfare organisations are considered as appealing partners for governments in developing and carrying out social policies (Snavely & Desai, 2001; Salamon, Sokolowski, & Associates, 2004) due to their position close to clients (Salamon, 1995; Boris & Steuerle, 1999), these private actors are also increasingly held accountable for the large amounts of public monies they receive (Huxham, 2003; Boyle & Butler, 2003).

This implies that private welfare organisations nowadays have to adhere to a relatively broad set of accountability parameters that relate, for example, to financial and administrative reporting procedures, the quality of services, the target groups to be served, and the goals to be realised. (Ospina, Diaz, & O'Sullivan, 2002; Whitaker, Altman-Sauer, & Henderson, 2004; Cho & Gillespie, 2006; May, 2007). Hence, starting from the late 1980s, this steering process must be considered as an attempt on behalf of central and also local governments to realise their growing ambitions with regard to social policies and welfare provision (De Rynck, 2002; De Rynck and Suykens, 2008) and will thus, to some extent, further influence the relative autonomous position of these so-called third parties to carry out public tasks (De Corte and Verschuere, 2014a).

This might make us wonder about the impact of this bureaucratic pressure on the internal behaviour of private welfare actors and their autonomy vis-à-vis government

in making their strategic decisions about who to serve and how to do this. With regard to our focus on the functioning of bottom-up networks, we consider this autonomy in regard to the public sector to be important, as private welfare organisations run the risk of becoming simply another arm of government (Boyle & Butler, 2003). Moreover, this could raise substantial questions about the value base of private welfare organisations because the processes of working with clients are not always quantifiable (Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Anheier, 2009), and could eventually result in a lack of flexibility for adequately responding to new or unconventional needs (Gronbjerg, 1991; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Jung & Moon, 2007; Gazley, 2010), such as through the creation of additional bottom-up networks at the local level.

As a result, this leads to another refinement of the first research question of this PhD, which will be dealt with via the second article (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014b):

> RQ 1.2 – *What are the degrees of autonomy of private welfare organisations vis-à-vis the public sector in Belgium*?

With regard to the second main research question about the need for evaluating the outcomes that are produced for citizens through these bottom-up networks at the local level, we might point as well to two factors that have hampered the ambition to use the right to social welfare in the context of the welfare state in Belgium. This will serve as a frame of reference to take into account the perspective and voices of those being served, and to embrace the ambiguous and unpredictable character of their demands (Hubeau, 1995; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007).

As outlined above, the intentional policy of subsidiarity throughout the first half of the 20th Century enabled the 'pillarised' private welfare organisations to obtain a relatively autonomous position vis-à-vis the public sector. Moreover, throughout the further development of the welfare state in the second half of the 20th century, central governments continued to rely on a policy in which a widening range of newly-established religious and pluralistic welfare organisations, which emerged to deal with welfare related problems, were recognised and financed to provide often very specialised welfare services to citizens that were not adequately helped by the existing welfare provision or measures related to the social security system. Furthermore, this specialisation of care was further reinforced due to the fragmented way in which the federal and regional administrations became gradually organised as a result of ongoing processes of state reforms and the distribution of competencies

between and within various governmental levels (Steyaert, 1983; De Rynck, 2002; Hermans, 2012; Fret, 2013). This fragmentation of care has eventually led to the emergence of numerous thresholds at the supply side of welfare provision to citizens in Belgium (Sannen, 2003; Piessens, 2007; Piessens & Lauwers, 2008).

The creation of interorganisational networks is then considered as a means to overcome this fragmentation of care and to realise a so-called collaborative advantage (Huxham, 2003) that relates to the creation of synergies between actors that are active in various policy fields by avoiding overlap, filling in service gaps and making efficient use of scarce resources to achieve an outcome that could have not been realised by individual actors working alone (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). In our view, this could be linked to a quest for enhancing the accessibility of the welfare services that are collectively produced by these networks, especially for citizens that risk falling between two stools due to the abovementioned thresholds at the supply side (Fret, 2009; Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014).

As such, the idea of working through networks is considered as a more flexible alternative to traditional hierarchical steering mechanisms (Powell, 1990; O'Toole, 1997), and could compensate for the insufficiencies of organising welfare provision towards vulnerable groups of citizens through market-based principles (Klijn, 2007; Isset, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011). Still, as outlined before, we acknowledge the need for evaluating the actual outcomes of these networks and thus to critically reflect upon this ability attributed to networks for eradicating thresholds related to fragmentation of care. This leads to a first refinement of our second main research question, which will be answered via article 3 (De Corte et al., 2015a) about the accessibility for citizens that is constructed via these networks:

> RQ 2.1 – *What are the thresholds to care when organising welfare provision to citizens through bottom-up networks at the local level*?

A second factor that might undermine the realisation of a right to social welfare is then about the emphasis within various government policies in Belgium on the individual capacity and responsibility of citizens themselves, instead of being 'passive' welfare recipients. This is for example reflected in processes of de-institutionalisation of care by phasing out residential capacity of care facilities (e.g. disability care, mental health care, etc.) with the aim of ensuring quality of life by supporting people to be self-reliant within their own environment (De Kracht van het Engagement, 2013;

Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014). This is, however, also mirrored in the creation of activating welfare states to ensure that citizens do not become dependent on services, but are able to make the most of their abilities and resources (Giddens, 1998). This has been also the case in Belgium via the introduction of the federal law on social integration (2002) through which granting a subsistence ('leefloon' or 'living wage') by the PCSWs became coupled to striving to obtain waged work as the way out of poverty and welfare dependency (Vandenbroucke, 1999; Vogels, 2006).

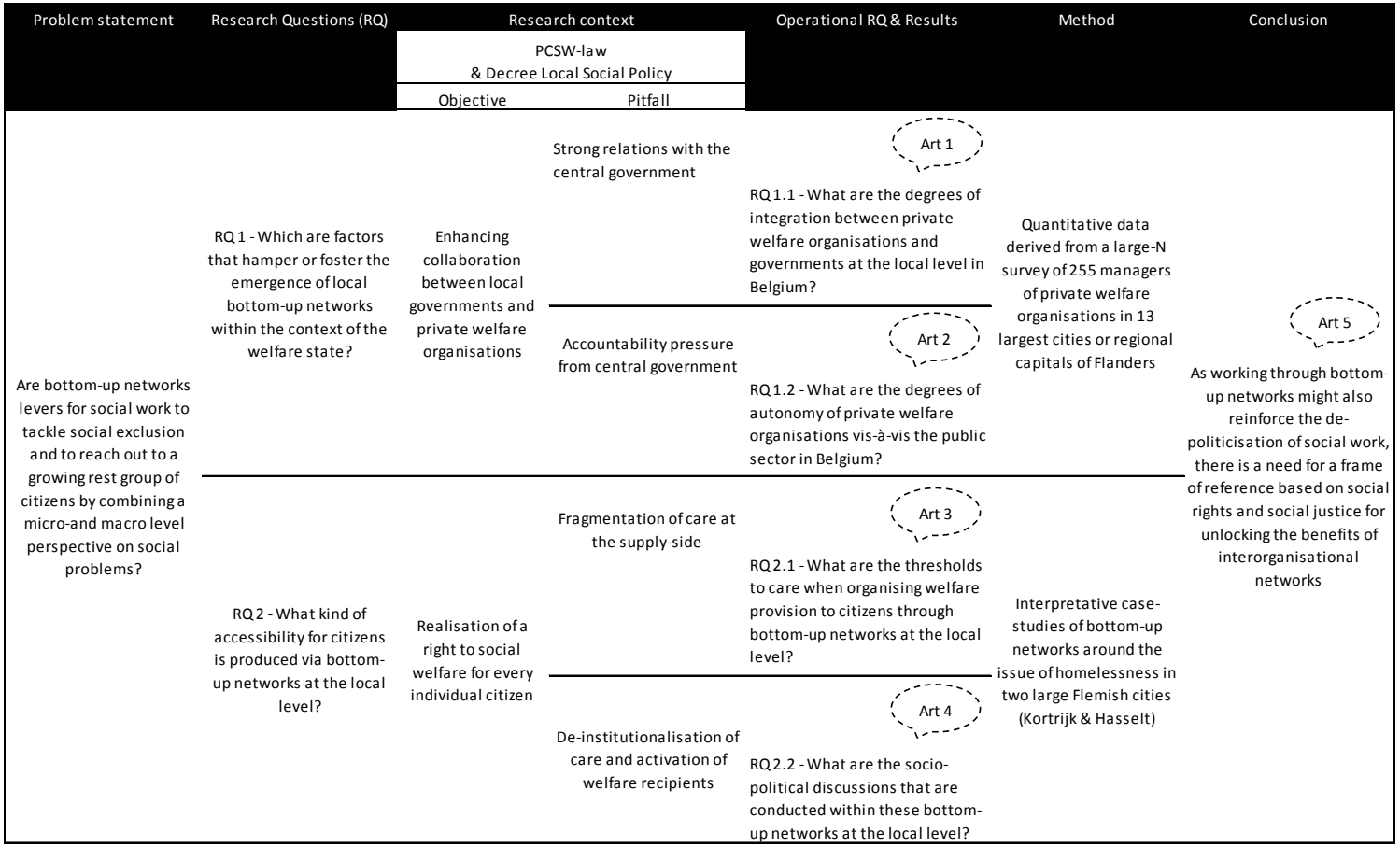

Figure 1 - Structure of doctoral dissertation

Nonetheless, it has been argued that citizens and welfare recipients have become more vulnerable in this particular context as well. This is because there might be insufficient ambulatory care capacity or voluntary support of relatives and neighbourhoods to enable people to be self-reliant within their own environment. Moreover, the concept of activation might be accomplished in an emancipatory manner but likewise from a more controlling or disciplining perspective as well (Hermans, 2005). As such, there is the danger of undermining the legal character of welfare provision (Hubeau & Geldof, 2008; Cantillon, 2009). As a result, reference has been also made to a so-called 'philosophical crisis of the welfare state' (Rosanvallon, 1995; Manssens, 2000; Deleeck & Cantillon, 2008) about the preservation of societal solidarity in regards to a group of vulnerable, low-educated and 'non-productive citizens' (Van Oorschot, 1998) lacking the skills for labour-market involvement in a knowledge-based society (Elchardus et al., 2003; Verschuere, 2014).

The creation of interorganisational networks is then considered as a means to counterbalance this emphasis on self-reliance and individual responsibility that could be linked to a managerial-driven perspective on organising welfare provision (Healy, 2002; Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Lorenz, 2005). This is because networks, which are basically characterised by a negotiated rationality and horizontal non-hierarchical relationships amongst different actors that share an interest in a common problem or target group (Scharpf, 1997; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009), could also be platforms or forums for enhancing learning (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007) and for collectively discussing social problems. As such, they could also develop alternative explanations for social problems by challenging beliefs and assumptions underlying their day-to-day practice, and take into account structural causes of social problems as well instead of simply focusing on individual behaviour and shortcomings.

Starting from our ambition of dealing with issue of network effectiveness and evaluating outcomes of networks from the perspective of citizens themselves, this leads to a further refinement of our second main research question, which will be answered via article 4 (De Corte, Verschuere, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015b):

> RQ 2.2. *What are the socio-political discussions that are conducted when organising welfare provision through networks at the local level*?

Finally, the findings that are derived from this series of separate articles might then also allow us to start to reflect upon our initial problem statement about the ability of

bottom-up networks to become a lever for social work to tackle social exclusion by combining a micro- and macro-perspective on social problems. Therefore, the fifth article (De Corte, Verschuere, Roets, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015c) is a more conceptual-driven article, which has a focus on the potential pitfalls of working through networks. Moreover, it presents a frame of reference, or value base, for steering network interactions that is considered necessary to unlock the benefits of working together through bottom-up networks for welfare provision.

In table 1, we provide a first brief overview of the different articles on which this doctoral dissertation is based.

ART	TITLE	AUTHORS	JOURNAL	STATUS
1	A typology for the relationship between local governments and nonprofit organisations in 'welfare state regimes'	Joris De Corte Bram Verschuere	Public Management Review	Accepted and published
2	Public nonprofit partnerships: Does public funding affect the autonomy of nonprofit decision making?	Bram Verschuere Joris De Corte	Nonprofit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly	Accepted and published
3	Bottom-up networks for welfare provision to citizens: Getting a grip on processes of social exclusion by evaluating network effectiveness.	Joris De Corte Bram Verschuere Maria Bouverne-De Bie	Social Policy and Administration	Submitted
4	The political role of social work: Grasping the momentum of working through interorganisational networks	Joris De Corte Bram Verschuere Maria Bouverne-De Bie	Human Service Organizations, Management, Leadership and Governance	Submitted
5	Uncovering the double-edged sword of inter-organisational networks of welfare services: Tackling wicked issues in social work	Joris De Corte Bram Verschuere Griet Roets Maria Bouverne-De Bie	British Journal of Social Work	Submitted

Table 1 - Overview of articles of this doctoral dissertation

1.5 Research method

As outlined before, this doctoral dissertation began with a particular interest in the functioning of bottom-up networks, which primarily emerged at the local governmental level and could be expected to become levers for social work to help to counterbalance social exclusion within the context of the welfare state. Therefore, we distilled two main research questions that were of central concern within the field of social work scholarship (also see Figure 1). Nevertheless, it might be stated that both research questions need a distinct approach from a methodological point of view. Hence, whereas the first research question about the breeding ground for bottom-up networks to occur will be approached via a quantitative large-N survey research, the second one is dealt with via an interpretative case-study research of two bottom-up networks that were created around the topic of homelessness in two large Flemish cities. In the following paragraphs, we will further substantiate these methodological choices and the mixed approach on which we relied.

1.5.1 Quantitative research (RQ1)

1.5.1.1 A brief note on the run-up to this dissertation

The first research question of this dissertation is about the factors that could hamper the emergence of bottom-up networks at the local level in the context of the welfare state in Belgium. In our view, this reference to the institutional context as the breeding ground in which these local networks could be embedded must also imply a focus on the relationships these private welfare organisations are able to develop with governments, both at the central level and at the local level, and the impact these relations have on the internal functioning of these private welfare actors.

As outlined before in the chapter about the interdisciplinary character of the present doctoral dissertation, I decided in close consultation with my supervisor and co-supervisor to start to approach the abovementioned problem statement by exploring an extant quantitative dataset, which I helped to construct myself during a short-term research project in which I was involved as a researcher at the Department of Business Administration and Public Administration at Ghent University College. Via a large-N survey, we obtained information of 255 managers of private welfare organisations in Flanders about the service delivering and expressive roles their organisations performed within society. We also obtained insight into the different dimensions (financing, accountability pressure, participation to the policy cycle, etc.)

of their relations with governments, especially with the regional Flemish government, in the context of the so-called third-party government regime in which private welfare actors as being 'third parties' are heavily financed and also steered to perform public tasks with regard welfare provision for citizens (Salamon, 1987; Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Verschuere, 2014).

More importantly, this quantitative dataset appeared to contain relevant but until then non-valorised information that could help us scrutinise the nature of their one-on-one relationships (e.g. in terms of financing, but also with regard to the degrees of communication and contact with local policy makers) with local governments (also see article 1), and to determine the impact of the institutional context, which we related to the strong financial and accountability ties with the Flemish government, through which the behaviour and autonomy of these private welfare organisations is shaped (also see article 2). Hence, starting from this large-N dataset, we should then be able to obtain a broad view from a wide variety of welfare-related policy domains about the space to manoeuvre for these private welfare organisations within the given institutional context, and to create additional dynamics at the local governmental. In the following paragraphs, we will further highlight how we selected our units of analysis, how data were collected and analysed and how variables were constructed that are relevant in the light of the chosen problem statement and research context of this doctoral dissertation.

1.5.1.2 Units of analysis

In order to determine the units of analysis for the large-N research, we primarily constructed a list of approximately 800 private welfare organisations via 'de sociale kaart' (www.desocialekaart.be) which provides a thematic overview of all organisations that are active within the fields of welfare and health care in Flanders and Brussels. We selected this research population using several criteria. First, we limited ourselves to four welfare-related policy domains that obtained increased governmental attention over the years: poverty reduction, elderly care, youth care and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities. Secondly, we only selected organisations that were active in one of the 13 largest Flemish cities or so-called 'regional capitals' ('centrumsteden'). This is because we expected that the majority of these welfare organisations were mainly established in larger cities and that these urban welfare organisations would not limit their activities to the city in which they are established, but would perform a pivotal role in attracting and serving citizens from the areas surrounding these large cities as well. Thirdly, we focused on welfare

organisations that had a private and a nonprofit character. The latter was reflected in the non-distribution constraint (also see Anheier, 2005) of these organisations, which mostly had the legal form of an association without profit-motives ('Vereniging Zonder Winstoogmerk'). As such, neither the public actors nor the private commercial actors that are active in some of these policy domains (e.g. retirement houses for elderly people) were taken into account. A fourth delineation of the research population was then attributed to the formal and permanent character of these organisations. This was reflected in the presence of professional staff. Although we recognised the important role of purely voluntary organisations in civil society, we focused on the professionalised organisations that have been able over the years to develop a relatively stable and long-term relationship with government under the third-party government regime in Belgium. The composition of the research population is also presented in table 2.

1.5.1.3 Collecting and analysing the data

The development of the questionnaire was based upon a review on the extant literature on the roles of private welfare organisations within civil societies, about the nature of their relationships with governments, and about the impact of these relationships on their internal behaviour and management (see for example Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Snavely & Desai, 2001; Salamon &Sokolowski, 2004; Anheier, 2005). Questions had a closed and non-open character as respondents were presented pre-structured answering categories. In order to test and further refine the questionnaire, we conducted eight pilot interviews with managers of private welfare organisations of all four policy domains under study, and with senior officials of the Flemish government who were active in the administrations that set out the regulations with regard to these policy domains.

The invitation to participate to the online survey was sent via e-mail in the course of January 2010, followed by reminders via e-mail and telephone in the next couple of weeks. The survey was sent directly to the manager of these organisations, as we expected these managers to have a broad view on the activities of their organisations and their relationships at these different governmental levels. We received 255 completed surveys that could be taken into account for further analysis. This means we obtained a response rate of 32%. Moreover, the relative distribution of the four sectors in the sample was similar to the relative distribution of the sectors in the total population (also see table 2), which makes our sample fairly representative in terms of sectoral distribution. Next, we also tested for non-response bias by comparing scores

on relevant variables between early respondents and late respondents who only answered after reminders (also see article 2).

	N population	% population	N sample	% sample	
Total sample	796	100%	255	100%	
Poverty reduction	322	40,5%	107	42,2%	This policy domain consists of Centres for General Welfare (CAW); organisations where poor raise their voice; community development; social economy initiatives; social housing companies; and finally organisations which provide material and social services to people who live in poverty (food, clothes, judicial support, leisure activities, etc.)
Elderly care	184	23%	45	17,6%	This policy domain consists of retirement houses; organisations that deliver ambulatory services and organisations that organise leisure-time activities for elderly people
Youth care	189	24%	73	28,5%	This policy domain consists of residential services for minors (shelters, etc.); educational support for families; foster services; and organisations that promote the welfare of vulnerable children
Integration of ethnic-cultural minorities	101	12,5%	30	11,7%	This policy domain consists of organisations that guide ethnic-cultural minorities to obligatory language lessons; organisations that learn ethnic-cultural minorities to integrate in civil society; and organisations that provide material and social services to ethnic-cultural minorities (food, clothes, judicial support, leisure activities, etc.)

Table 2 – Composition of research sample (Large-N)

For a more detailed overview of how these quantitative data were processed, we might then refer to the first two articles of this doctoral dissertation. In short, with

regard to our first operational research (RQ 1.1) about the degrees of integration between private welfare organisations and local governments, we relied on a particular variable based on the scores of respondents on questions about the frequency and intensity of their formal and informal contacts with different policy makers at the local level. The process of constructing this variable, based on the original typology of Kuhnle and Selle (1990), is elaborated in more detail in article 1.

With regard to our second operational research question (RQ 1.2), we constructed an independent variable that was derived from resource dependency theory and also a dependent variable to measure the degree of organisational autonomy. The latter was also substantiated by conducting a principal component analysis, which helped us to state that the four questions which we asked respondents about their organisational autonomy all referred to only one underlying construct. In order to test the impact of the initial resource dependency framework on the degree of organisational autonomy we then conducted ANOVA-tests. Accordingly, we also conducted additional tests with the aim of further analysing the significant relationships between our independent and dependent variables: Post hoc Scheffe tests for variables consisting of three or more categories, and Mann-Whitney tests for variables consisting of two categories.

1.5.2 Qualitative research (RQ2)

1.5.2.1 Developing a research strategy

After having focused on the breeding ground for bottom-up networks to occur at the local level in Belgium, the second main research question of this doctoral dissertation aims to further explore the outcomes that are actually produced for citizens once these bottom-up networks have become operational. The latter could then be translated into a question of what kind of the accessibility is constructed for citizens through these collaborative endeavours. This resulted in two operational research questions about the need for unravelling thresholds to care when organising welfare provision via bottom-up networks (RQ 2.1), and about the socio-political debates about complex social problems that are conducted within these networks (RQ 2.2) (also see figure 1).

Starting from this particular set of research questions, we argue that a case study could be considered as the most appropriate research methodology to analyse these questions (Yin, 2003). A case study could be seen as a strategy for doing research that

involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real life context, and for which multiple sources of evidence are used (Robson, 2002). A case-study approach equally allows development of a more holistic view on these bottom-up networks as contemporary societal phenomena that are not yet fully understood (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). This comprehensive picture could be realised by taking into account many of the contextual factors that characterise and determine the functioning of these networks as a whole (Agranoff, 2007). Furthermore, our research will be an interpretative one, as we also aim to go beyond the mere description of these phenomena and attempt to further explore their meaning by developing subjective meanings based upon conceptual and theoretical frameworks (also see the chapter on the refinement of our research questions).

In this doctoral dissertation we relied on a case study of two bottom-up networks. Cases were selected upon a substantive, a geographical and a pragmatic criterion (Swanborn, 1996; Agranoff, 2007). We start with the pragmatic criterion, which refers to the fact that the Department of Social Welfare Studies received a request in the course of 2011 from the PCSW of Kortrijk to study the collaborative endeavours in which they had become involved throughout the last couple of years. In essence, the PCSW recognised the increasing importance of working together with private welfare organisations that were active on their territory via the creation of a range of service delivering networks. Nevertheless, it equally appeared that there was still a lack of knowledge about how to coordinate these networks, as the PCSW was expected to do due to the PCSW-law and the Decree on Local Social Policy, and about how to evaluate the outcomes that were collectively produced via these networks. Hence, soon after the beginning of my employment in September 2011, I became involved in the consultation between the PCSW of Kortrijk and the Department, as my previous research had already focused on the topic of the relationship between local government and private welfare organisations. Most importantly, these preparatory meetings allowed us to clarify the problem and to explore possible approaches to get a grip on these collaborative processes in which the PCSW was involved. As such, it became recognised that this initial request from the PCSW in Kortrijk could be incorporated in the doctoral dissertation I was then planning to conduct.

This eventually led to a substantive criterion to guide the case selection for my doctoral dissertation. This relates to the decision to focus more in-depth on the collaboration between the PCSW and private welfare organisations via a bottom-up around the topic of homelessness in Kortrijk. After all, homelessness could be

considered as a good example of a so-called wicked issue (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that cuts across policy domains and service areas (Clarke & Stewart, 1997). As such, the homeless are not a homogenous population because being homeless entails multiple (e.g. lack of financial means, psychiatric dysfunction, substance abuse, process of disaffiliation, etc.) dimensions (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Larsen, Poortinga, & Hurdle, 2004; European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), 2009; Lee et al., 2010). This multidimensional character of homelessness has eventually led to the involvement of various policy fields around this topic, such as primary line care, housing, mental health care, addiction care, and community building, that are subject to different regulations not necessarily complementary to one another. Furthermore, the bottom-up networks under study in this article have a voluntary and bottom-up character (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003) and could be considered as relevant instruments to look after a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach group of homeless people that is not yet able or willing to have access to regular service provision.

During the period in which I was conducting the research in Kortrijk, we equally began to explore opportunities to conduct a similar study in another large Flemish city or regional capital ('centrumsteden'). Hence, we eventually relied on a geographical criterion to select our cases as well. We began to explore existing policy documents of other large cities and found similar collaborative dynamics that occurred around the topic of homelessness in, for example, Ostend, Genk and Hasselt. After having had explorative contacts via e-mail and telephone with the PCSWs in these cities, we eventually planned a meeting with the head of the social service of the PCSW in Hasselt in the summer of 2013. During this meeting, it appeared that there were many similarities between the situations and concerns of the PCSWs in Kortrijk and Hasselt with regard to the emergence of networks for welfare provision, and the creation of a network around the topic of homelessness in particular. For an overview of the composition of the steering groups of the networks around homelessness in Kortrijk and Hasselt, we might refer to the tables in Article 4 (De Corte et al., 2015b). Hence, by deliberately selecting two similar cases, instead of dealing with two widely-distinct cases, we would be able to advance knowledge about the little-studied topic of bottom-up networks for welfare provision, and help to establish an overall frame of reference with regard to the topic of network effectiveness as well (Kenis & Provan, 2009; Cepiku, 2013).

1.5.2.2 Data collection

Primary data were obtained from multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003): document analysis, interviews and direct observations. In practice, these stages of data collection were, however, not completely separated but were sometimes conducted simultaneously. First, we relied on an analysis of documents and archival records. This concerned documents and policy plans, both from the regional Flemish government and the local governments under study here, about the development of social policies, about the problem of homelessness and the tendency to create networks around 'wicked' social problems. Therefore, I examined the meeting reports of the city council and the council of the PCSW in Kortrijk and Hasselt from the past 10 years. Next, I scrutinised academic reports with regard to the topics of homelessness and the formation of networks in Flanders, and the corresponding articles and opinion pieces that fed the discussion amongst academic and practitioners (see for example www.sociaal.net). Most importantly, I then also analysed documents that emerged from the bottom-up networks under study themselves: the agenda and the meeting reports of the steering committee of the networks that gathered approximately once a month, strategic notes directed to the city council, yearly evaluation reports of the concrete projects (e.g. night shelter) these networks had developed, draft memos generated by network members to prepare meetings, etc.

Secondly, I conducted a series of 25 interviews in Kortrijk and Hasselt with representatives of the PCSWs and the private welfare organisations that could be considered as formal members of the network, who regularly participated to network meetings or had a stake in the development of its operational projects. Respondents represented different professional disciplines and sectors (for example, primary line of care, mental health care, addiction care, and street corner work), different internal positions (because the steering group and different working groups of these networks consisted of both fieldworkers and managers), and different legal nature (e.g. public servants of the PCSW vs. employees of private welfare organisations). These respondents were all briefed via e-mail in advance that they would be contacted in the near future to participate to the research. In a similar vein, we also provided an explanatory letter to the heads of the social services of the PCSWs that could then be distributed during a next meeting of the network to further inform all members about the objective and approach of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured in the sense they were planned and prepared in a systematic way. This implies that we discussed a standard list of themes that was

derived from the preliminary conceptual framework but that became, however, also extended during our research as respondents brought up new themes or issues, which could then be discussed with other respondents as well. Moreover, by providing background information or concrete illustrations myself, when asking questions, or by pointing to different views collected during earlier interviews or document analysis, respondents became more eager to tell their stories as well to the researcher. All interviews were taken by myself as a researcher, were face-to-face and also bilateral (one interviewer vs. one interviewee), with only a single interview with two interviewees at the same time as an exception to this rule.

These interviews were appropriate means for assessing network participants' views on and interpretations of actions and events (Walsham, 1995). In a general sense, the respondents were asked about topics related to the functioning of the network (e.g. about the obstacles and opportunities of working together through networks, the importance of trust and the role of a coordinating agency within the network, etc.) and the effectiveness of the network (for example, the impact the network was able to realise for homeless people themselves, or the impact on their own organisations in terms of maintaining their autonomy with regard to admission policies).

The interviews approximately took between 1 hour and 1 hour and 30 minutes, were recorded on tape with approval of the respondents, and were transcribed afterwards. Moreover, during the interviews I took extensive notes as a researcher myself, which were then written out in the hours after the interviews. This enabled me to further clarify and interpret the data and link them to the categories and codes, which we derived from our conceptual framework (Walsham, 1995).

Thirdly, I was able to get to know the cases from the inside by site visits (for example, by getting a tour in the night shelter or a welfare organisation after having conducted an interview) and by regularly attending meetings of the steering committee or by attending a meeting of a case consultation as an observer. Where possible, I took extensive notes during these meetings and wrote down some general impressions about the interactions between network members, which could be added to the case study database. At the end of these meetings, I was also able to have some informal chats with respondents I had already interviewed, or make some further appointments with other network members about future interviews.

1.5.2.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse our data, we rely on a qualitative content analysis, which is considered as an appropriate research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This implies a focus on the characteristics of language as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of text data, which have been obtained from interviews, observations, document analysis, etc. with the aim of providing knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

In concrete, we opted to conduct a directed content analysis, which is generally based upon a theory or framework that could be related to the initial research questions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, we started from a preliminary framework and identified and defined three main codes that could respectively be related to the network structure, the network functioning and the network effectiveness (also see Provan & Milward, 1995; Turrini et al., 2009). Furthermore, we developed additional codes and dimensions for each of these three main codes.

Coding was done manually by the researcher and was combined with the making of various analytical schemes and figures that could help to get a more firm grip on the data. The consistency of the coding was regularly checked by going through the same data again afterwards and through consultation with my (co-)supervisor and colleagues. Moreover, as coding could be considered as an iterative process of moving back and forth through the data, the researcher became more and more familiar with these data, which allowed particular themes to emerge from the data. As such, the empirical data could be eventually converted into categories, patterns and sets of relations (Agranoff, 2007). Therefore, we equally constructed a case study database, which was based upon the initial theoretical and conceptual framework, to ensure the reliability of the research and to ensure that another researcher that would use the exact same procedures to conduct these case studies would come to the same findings (Yin, 2003). Moreover, we acknowledge that the process of coding proceeded while new data were obtained due to interviews, analysis of documents, etc. As such, it became possible that new themes or concepts emerged and were added to the initial coding manual.

Drawbacks of the directed content analysis relate to the possible overemphasis on theoretical frameworks which might make researchers blind to contextual aspects of a

societal phenomenon. Furthermore, there is the risk that the researcher approaches the data with an informed but also strong bias (Darke et al., 1998). Hence, in order to counterbalance the biases in the researcher's collection and analysis of case data and to enhance the construct validity it was important to use multiple sources of evidence for triangulation of data and to regularly have meetings with my (co)supervisor and other colleagues to obtain valuable feedback that could be checked and eventually also be used to partly adjust my own research if necessary (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

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Chapter 2

A typology for the relationship between local governments and NPOs in welfare state regimes: the Belgian case revisited

Abstract

We test a typology of public-private partnerships (Kuhnle and Selle 1990) by survey-data on the relationship between NPOs and Flemish local governments. We found that quite strong relations occur, but this is not a uniform picture: although most NPOs are not financially dependent on local government, there is variation in NPO-local government contacts. We observe that NPOs active in poverty fighting, or in integration of ethnic minorities, build stronger relations, compared to NPOs in elderly care or youth care. Our analysis allows to refine the original typology by adding intermediate positions on the initial dichotomous scales of 'dependence' and 'nearness'.

2.1 Introduction and research topic

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) perform a variety of roles in contemporary societies. In addition to their role in social welfare provision, NPOs are also involved in the development of public policies, and they may give a voice to the interests of their clients, or have a stake in the creation of social capital (Putnam, 1995; Ross & Osborne, 1999; Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999; Snavely & Desai, 2001; Anheier, 2005; Schneider, 2009; Balassiano & Chandler, 2010). An important issue in current nonprofit research is about the understanding of the relations these private nonprofit actors develop with government, especially given the trend towards increased cooperation and financial ties between NPOs and governments in many modern welfare states (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Salamon, Sokolowski & Associates, 2004). As Najam (2000) puts it, NPOs hereby function as policy entrepreneurs which make their way through different stages of the policy cycle. Due to their initial social mission, NPOs are equally driven by a desire to defend the interests of their constituents and clients and to advocate for social change. In this process, the resources, goals, interests and priorities of the NPOs and governments inevitably will collide, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord. It is argued that the nature and conditions of this interaction will shape the NPO-government relationships that emerge. In that respect there is a tension, that can't be ignored nor camouflaged, between these actors as they both float through the same policy stream (Najam, 2000). In order to capture these tensions scholars have developed ideal-typical typologies or frameworks through which these interactions could be analyzed along different relational dimensions with the purpose of locating nation-states within various descriptive or explanatory groupings (Kuhnle & Selle, 1990; Coston, 1998; Najam, 2000; Young, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2002; McLaughlin & Osborne, 2003; Vincent & Harrow, 2005; Dörner, 2008; Zimmer, 2010). Still, these typologies have been rarely subject to empirical testing (Vincent & Harrow, 2005).

With this study, we hope to contribute to the understanding of the nature of the relationships NPOs and local governments have developed. We will apply the typology originally developed by Kuhnle and Selle (1990) in Flanders, the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. Our analysis will be based on survey-data, from a questionnaire that was completed by more than 200 Belgian NPO executives. Although, historically spoken, many of these NPOs have established tight boundaries with the regional Flemish government (e.g. in terms of financing), we recently witnessed a tendency to increase the role of local governments in steering these private nonprofit organizations.

Therefore, the main focus of this article will be on the relationships between local governments and NPOs.

Our study has two main objectives. Firstly: *measuring the features of the specific relations NPOs develop with local government, and systematizing these by making use of a conceptual typology*. This will allow us to understand these relationships, and to feedback empirical reality to typologies. Secondly, our study also has some policy-relevance. Based on our data, we should be able to add to the discussion about the extent to which regulation that is imposed by central government, is actually implemented at the local level. Flemish government recently launched the Decree on Local Social Policy (2004), by which the Flemish government explicitly asks local governments, as being the closest level to citizens, to increase their interactions with private nonprofit suppliers that are active on their territory with the purpose of maximizing accessibility of basic social service delivery to the largest amount of citizens (Verschuere & De Rynck, 2010). Thus, based on our research, *we will be able to assess the extent to which empirical reality (the perception of NPOs about their relations with local government) offers fertile ground to implement the ideas of the Decree on Local Social Policy (increasing and formalizing NPO – local government cooperation).*

This article will be structured as follows. We will first outline the research context: the Flemish welfare state, as an example of the cluster of continental European welfare states, and the regulatory framework in which local government – NPO relationships develop in Flanders: the Decree on Local Social Policy. Secondly, we review the literature on government-nonprofit relationships, and select a concept that is relevant for our research purposes. Thirdly, we discuss our research method. Fourthly, the results of our analysis will be presented. Finally, we conclude with a discussion in which we will elaborate on this article's dual objective by adding to the debate on the nature of the relationships between governments and NPOs in a modern welfare regime, and by discussing the circumstances under which top-down policy initiatives, aiming at increasing and formalizing this cooperation, can be implemented in reality.

2.2 The research context: the Flemish welfare state, local social policy and government – NPO relations

As governments in many contemporary welfare states increasingly interact with private nonprofit organizations to deliver social services, the nonprofit sector has become an essential part of the 'welfare-mix', made of shared responsibilities among

various types of service providers (Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999; Defourny & Pestoff, 2008). This has also been the case under the 'third-party government' regime as it was established in the aftermath of the Second World War in Belgium. The importance of this nonprofit sector is clear: its activities represent approximately 10% of the GDP and the nonprofit workforce is the equivalent of 359.000 full-time jobs (Defourny & Pestoff, 2008). In relative terms, the nonprofit sector under study in this article even is amongst the largest in the world (Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski,. 1999). Overall, these NPOs nowadays receive more than half of their total income from public resources to fulfill their role, as so-called 'third parties' on behalf of government, in public welfare provision (Salamon, 1987; De Rynck, Verschuere & Wayenberg, 2009). Although most Belgian NPOs have historically been recognized, financed and steered by the regional Flemish government, the role and impact of local governments towards these NPOs may not be overlooked (Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999; Anheier, 2005; De Rynck, Verschuere & Wayenberg,. 2009). This could be especially the case in major Flemish cities, in which local governments have always been involved, to some or lesser extent, in day-to-day interaction with these private actors active on their territory.

With the recent Decree on Local Social Policy (2004) Flemish government specifically aims at increasing and formalizing these public-private interactions at the local level. Local governments have a coordinating role in mapping the supply of social welfare services on their territory in a more systematic way and to attune service delivering efforts of all actors involved. Hence, local governments are expected to maintain direct contacts with these actors and formally involve them in the development of local social policies.

2.3 Literature review: the relationship between governments and NPOs

Several dimensions of the relationship between governments and NPOs have been highlighted in the nonprofit literature. In a general sense, Anheier (2005) distinguishes between funding (grants, fee-for-service contracts, etc), non-monetary support (facilities, expertise, etc), mandates (government required to involve nonprofit associations in implementing policy) and regulations and accountability. However, the meaning and magnitude of these relationships differ by type of organization (large charities versus small local associations), field (social services versus international development) and levels of government involved (federal versus local or regional) (Anheier, 2005). From the perspective of the NPOs service delivery role, it has been

argued that the relationship between these NPOs and governments (for example with the purpose of implementing social policies) is most directly embodied by the funding streams and the control measures attached to these funds (Toepler, 2010; Suarez, 2011). The financial ties between governments and the nonprofit sector have been studied in the John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. It was found that, especially in Western countries, public funding is a very important income source, representing a significant share, and in some cases even more than half, of the NPOs total budget (Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999). Furthermore, a substantial amount of literature focuses on the accountability requirements attached to these public funds and the processes through which governments try to exert control over these non-public actors involved in public service delivery Ospina, Diaz, & O'Sullivan, 2002; Whitaker, Altman-Sauer, & Henderson, 2004; Cho & Gillespie, 2006; May, 2007; VanSlyke, 2007; Benjamin, 2008).

Although most NPOs primarily focus on delivering services, often (but not always) in collaboration with the state, they also perform other roles in civil society (Anheier 2005). Nonprofit organizations could for example engage in advocacy work or could have a stake in the formulation and development of new policies, by translating issues into political claims that can be defended by maintaining direct contacts or open lines of communication with policy makers (Kramer 1981; Salamon 1995; Ross and Osborne 1999; Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999; Snavely & Desai, 2001; Sawer, 2002; Binderkrantz, 2005; Balassiano & Chandler, 2010; Mosley, 2011). Furthermore, NPOs are also playing a role in the creation of social capital in societies. By bringing people together to interact, to learn more about each other, to collaborate in activities and to voice opinions, they build up a repository of trust and norms of reciprocity, meaning that they are obligated to promote their common interests (Putnam, 1995; Putnam, 2000).

International scholarship on the interaction between governments and nonprofit organizations has however not been limited to a mere description of some relational dimensions. Some recent studies specifically focused on the management of those partnerships and its impact on potential outcomes (Wang, 2006; Gazley, 2010; Klijn, Steijn & Edelenbos, 2010; Mandell & Keast, 2011; Amirkhanyan, Kim & Lambright, 2012). In the last decade many scholars tried to develop typologies of government-nonprofit interactions based on a combination of at least two dimensions. Such typologies proved to be excellent frameworks to capture some of the systematic variations in government-NPO relationships into ideal-typical categories. Amongst the most cited typologies are for example the 4C's model of Adil Najam (2000), the complementary, supplementary and adversarial lenses of Dennis Young (2000), the work of McLaughlin and Osborne on community governance in the UK (2003); and the

refinement of government-NPO partnerships by Jennifer Brinkerhoff (Najam, 2000; Young, 2000; Brinkerhoff, 2002; McLaughlin & Osborne, 2003). A particularly interesting framework, for the purposes of our study, was developed by Stein Kuhnle and Per Selle (1990) in order to study the nature of the government-NPO relationships in their home country Norway. Their framework and its particular dimensions proved to be very relevant to study government-NPO relationships in the context of welfare regimes. It can for example allow us to study the 'one-on-one' relationships between local governments and individual organizations as units of analysis. Furthermore, our dataset of more than 200 Flemish NPO executives contains several variables through which key dimensions of this typology, such as 'contact', 'financing' and 'control' could be measured. Kuhnle and Selle's framework can also be helpful to put our findings into a comparative perspective, as this typology has recently been applied by other scholars doing research in other countries like Scotland, England, Denmark and Slovenia (Vincent & Harrow, 2005; Henriksen, 2007; Kolaric & Rakar, 2007).

Stein Kuhnle and Per Selle (1990) conceptualized the relationship between government and NPO along the dimensions of 'closeness' (or distance) between both actors, and the independence (or autonomy) of the nonprofit organizations from government. The first dimension ('*closeness*') refers to the scope, the frequency and the easiness with which communication between both actors occurs. Organizations may thus be more near in terms of communication and contact, and hence more integrated with the state, or they may be more distant and hence more separated from the state. However, one should be aware that a form of 'nearness' does not necessarily entails a strong ideological affinity. Closeness thus refers to a situation in which government is willing to cooperate with each actor, avoiding the undue favoring of specific ideas. The second dimension ('*independence*') relates to finance and control, which would determine the nonprofit's dependence or independence from government. Measurements of control are usually attached to financing agreements. Still, in most western welfare states NPOs may be dependent upon public funding, this does not imply that they all suffer from heavy regulation. In that respect control and finance should best be dealt with as separate measures for organizational independence from government (Henriksen, 2007).

		In terms of communication and contact	
		Distance	Nearness
In terms of finances and control	Independence	Separate autonomy	Integrated autonomy
	Dependence	Separate dependence	Integrated dependence

Figure 1 – Typology of government-nonprofit relationships (Kuhnle and Selle, 1990)

Combining both dimensions leads to four different positions (see figure 1). 'Integrated dependence' means that the organization heavily relies on government to obtain sufficient resources or faces strong control pressure, while it is also able to maintain close contacts with government officials. In case of 'separate dependence' the organization is still largely dependent on government monies (or it faces control measures), but it does not maintain close contacts with government officials. In a situation of 'integrated autonomy' the NPO does not receive significant financial support from government or faces only weak accountability pressure but still it is able to maintain its contacts with government officials. Finally, in case of 'separate autonomy' the organization is not dependent on government for funding or control measures while it does also not maintain close links with government officials. Figure 1 contains all four possible models of interaction between governments and NPOs as outlined by Kuhnle and Selle.

2.4 Research method

As it is this article's central aim to understand the nature of the relationship between NPOs and government through the use of a relational typology, we need an operationalization of some key concepts for field-testing. In our approach, more than 700 private nonprofit organizations were addressed, via a large-N survey, about their relationships with governments at the national (federal) level, the regional (Flemish) level and the local level. Our units of analysis are service-delivering NPOs active in four areas of current welfare policy in Flanders that received increased governmental attention in recent years: the field of poverty reduction, elderly care, youth care, and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities. Having listed all organizations active in these service areas, we then started to further delineate our population. First, we limited ourselves to those organizations that have a permanent and formal character. This was reflected in the presence of paid staff. We recognize that purely voluntary organizations do play an important role in vitalizing contemporary civil societies. However, given the particular aim of this article (determining the relationships), we only selected the more professionalized service agencies that have been able to

develop long-term relationships with policy makers. Second, the selected NPOs also have a private character. The fact that they receive large amounts of their income from public authorities may thus not prevent them from being self-governed as private entities. This implies that all public service providers in these areas were deleted from the population. Third, we only selected one particular legal type of organizations, the so-called "associations without for-profit motives" (known as VZWs—Verenigingen Zonder Winstoogmerk—in Flanders). This is the dominant legal form in the Flemish nonprofit sector (and especially in the domain of welfare) and implies that these organizations are legally bounded by the nondistribution constraint. Finally, we limited ourselves to organizations that are active in one of the 13 biggest cities in Flanders, being the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. It is important to acknowledge that, especially in a densely populated region such as Flanders, these urban NPOs do not limit their activities to the city in which they are established but also perform a pivotal role in attracting and serving customers and citizens from surrounding areas as well. Furthermore, many of the societal issues dealt with in the selected policy domains, especially poverty reduction and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities, are predominately typical urban phenomena in Flanders.
Following a pilot of 8 organizations, the survey was e-mailed to all the NPO executive (a CEO or director) in January 2010. Two weeks after the survey was launched we contacted respondents via a telephone reminder. This resulted in a total response rate of 35% (or 255 organizations). For a full overview of the composition of the research sample and the respective response rates in the four policy domains under study we refer to the table in annex 1.

The choice for choosing a one-side only NPO-oriented survey should not be problematic, as previous research indicates that it are mainly the NPOs that may have the lesser incentive to cooperate with local government, than vice versa. The reason is that most NPOs in our research population are financed and steered by the Flemish government, hence develop strong accountability relations with the Flemish regional government which is their principal governmental sparring partners. The fact that most NPOs are not, or only very little, financed by local governments, implies that local government has only few possibilities to incentivize NPOs to engage in their local social policy (Verschuere & De Rynck, 2010). For this reasons, surveying the NPOs' perceptions of their relations with local government is a valid approach to test the extent to which current practice is fertile ground to have the ideas of the Decree on Local Social Policy implemented.

In the process of developing the questionnaire, the typology of Kuhnle and Selle, but also empirical research based on this framework (Vincent & Harrow, 2005; Henriksen,

2007) was an important source of inspiration for translating these abstract concepts that underpin the framework into operational definitions and concrete questions intended to be meaningful for nonprofit executives in Flanders. According to their first dimension, Kuhnle and Selle suggest that the 'closeness' of an organization to the state relates to the scope, the frequency and easiness of the communication and contact. In our survey we asked respondents to indicate the frequency (or intensity) of the direct contacts their organizations have with policy makers at the local level. This resulted in two separate variables in which organizations got a score of 0 (rather not having direct contacts) or 1 (having direct lines of communication at most times). The first variable measured the amount of direct contacts with politicians at the local level, while the second one measured the amount of direct contacts with administrations (civil servants) at the local level. In order to obtain one unique variable that could help us to determine the nearness of each NPO to local policy makers (both politicians and administrations) we then recoded the original variables into a new variable with three categories. The first category represented the situation in which NPOs did not have any direct contacts, nor with politicians nor with administrations, at the local governmental level and thus are very separated from the state. The second category reflected the situation in which NPOs developed direct contacts with only one local policy maker (either politicians or either administrations). The third category represented a situation in which NPOs maintained direct contacts with both local politicians and local administrations.

The second dimension of the typology relates to the 'independence' of the organizations from the state. According to Kuhnle and Selle organizations may be either autonomous or dependent vis-à-vis government in two different ways: in terms of financing and in terms of control. As it is argued that the financing and control actually reflect different aspects of the NPOs independence from the state, we will hold on to this difference in the remainder of this article (Henriksen, 2007; Toepler, 2010). The aspect of finance is measured as the amount of income that was provided by local government in the NPOs total budget. Respondents could position their organization into one of three categories presented to them. The first category consists of NPOs indicating that local government income does only represent a marginal share (less than 10%) of their total budget. In that respect these organizations may operate autonomous from local government. A second category reflected a situation in which NPOs received a substantial part (more than 10% but less than 50%) of their income from local government. We argue that these organizations are relatively dependent upon local government. The third category contains all NPOs to which local government is the dominant source of income (more than 50% of the total budget), implying large dependence.

The control-dimension is measured as the extent to which NPOs must adhere to a set of accountability parameters imposed by local government. In concrete, we asked respondents to indicate whether or not (score 0 or 1) they must adhere to the following accountability parameters imposed by local government in the municipality in which they were active: the need to provide reports on the financial performance of the NPO; the obligation to follow specified administrative procedures; requirements to ensure the quality of the services the NPO delivers; requirements about the quantity (number of services) of the NPOs service delivery; demands for serving specific groups within civil society (target audience); and finally the need to obtain social effects through their service delivery (e.g. reducing poverty, etc.). We then constructed a new variable that reflects the relative degree of control exerted by local government. As was the case for the other two key variables of our framework, this variable consists of three categories. Looking at this particular control dimension the first category contains all NPOs that are held accountable by local government on maximum one out of six parameters. In that respect one could argue that these NPOs are able to maintain their autonomy. The second category consists of those organizations held accountable by two to four (on a total of six) of the above accountability parameters. The third category contains NPOs that have to adhere to at least five or even all six accountability parameters presented to them, implying large dependence towards local government.

2.5 Results: measuring local government – NPO relations

Using crosstabs we combine the variable of nearness (contact) with the variables of the NPOs' financial independence (finance) from local government, and the accountability pressure (control) exerted by local government on NPO's.

Table 1[5] shows that 20% of all organizations in our sample do not receive substantial income (less than 10% of their total income) from local government, while also being separated from local government in terms of communication and contacts. This reflects a situation of *separate autonomy*. We notice that almost half of the NPOs in this group (14 out of 29) are active in youth care (Y). We also observe that 26% of the organizations combines poor financial ties to local government with very high levels of

[5] From the 255 organisations that responded to our survey, 140 can be used for our analyses. This reduced number of organisations is due to the fact that organisations that have a missing value on one of the key variables for this study have been left out of the analyses.

contact with local policy makers (both administrations and politicians). This reflects a situation of *integrated autonomy*. About one third of both the elderly care organizations (E: 9 out of 25) and the organizations for ethnic-cultural minorities (M: 8 out of 22) belong to this category.

P=poverty (N=51) E=elderly care (N=25) Y= youth care (N=42) M=ethnic-cultural minorities (N=22)			NEARNESS												
			Frequency of contacts with local policy makers (3 catg)												Total
			NPO is separated from local government (no contacts with local politicians and administrations)				NPO is relatively close to local government (having contacts with local politicians or local administrations, but not with both)				NPO is very close to local government (contacts with both local politicians and local administrations				
			N (and %) in total sample				N (and %) in total sample				N (and %) in total sample				
			P	E	Y	M	P	E	Y	M	P	E	Y	M	
DEPENDENCE	Amount of income from local government	NPO is not dependent at all on local government (<10% of total budget)	29 (20%)				31 (22%)				37 (26%)				97
			3	8	14	4	10	8	9	4	12	9	8	8	
		NPO is relatively dependent on local government (10-50% of total budget)	1 (0,9%)				3 (3%)				23 (16%)				27
			1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	17	0	3	3	
		NPO is heavily dependent on local government (>50% of total budget)	0 (0,0%)				2 (2%)				14 (10%)				16
			0	0	0	0	2	0	0	°	4	0	8	2	
	Total		30				36				74				140

Table 1 – Relations of Flemish NPOs to local governments in terms of contacts and amount of income (scores for total sample and for each of the four policy domains under study)

Within the group of NPOs that is heavily dependent on local government income (N=16) we see that almost all of these organizations (14 out of 16) also maintains close contacts with local social policy makers. Or, in other words, exactly 10% of all NPOs in our sample could be assigned to a situation of *integrated dependence*. More than half of the NPOs in this group (8 out of 14) is active in youth care. Next, there were no organizations that combined a significant amount of local government income (more than 50% of their total budget) and low levels of communication and contact with local policy makers (situation of *separate dependence)*.

Still, there are two clusters of NPOs in table 1 that deserve some further attention. First, we witness a relatively large group of 31 NPOs (22% of our total sample) that have very little financial ties with local government, but still are relatively close either with local politicians or local administrations. We notice that this category contains organizations from all four policy domains under study. Second, there is a group of 23 NPOs (16% of the total sample) that have very close contacts with both local policy makers while also being relatively dependent on local government (between 10 and 50% of their budget) for their financing. This seems especially to be the case for poverty organizations (P) which represent the largest share (17 out of 23) within this category.

Table 2[6] shows that 24 NPOs (16% of our sample) do not maintain close contacts with local policy makers, neither with politicians nor with administrations, while also not facing high levels of government control (*separate autonomy)*. Half of the NPOs in this group (12 out of 24) are active in youth care. Next, 21 organizations (or 14% of the sample) are in a situation in which they do not face strong control from local government, but are still able to maintain close contacts with local policy makers (*integrated autonomy)*. More than one third (8 out of 22) of the organizations that are active in the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities does belong to this category. Concerning the situation of *separate dependence*, we found only very little (approximately 1 % of the sample) empirical support for the existence of this category in Flanders. Next, 36 organizations in our sample (25%) could be assigned to the category of *integrated dependence* as they are strongly controlled or held accountable by local government, and at the same time also maintaining very close contacts with local policy makers. This seems to be especially the case for organizations active in reducing poverty and the group of NPOs that works with disadvantaged youth.

[6] From the 255 organisations that responded to our survey, 145 can be used for our analyses. This reduced number of organisations is due to the fact that organisations that have a missing value on one of the key variables for this study have been left out of the analyses.

P=poverty (N=57) E=elderly care (N=24) Y= youth care (N=42) M=ethnic-cultural minorities (N=22)			NEARNESS												
			Frequency of contacts with local policy makers (3 catg)												Total
			NPO is separated from local government (no contacts with local politicians and administrations)				NPO is relatively close to local government (having contacts with local politicians or local administrations, but not with both)				NPO is very close to local government (contacts with both local politicians and local administrations				
			N (and %) in total sample				N (and %) in total sample				N (and %) in total sample				
			P	E	Y	M	P	E	Y	M	P	E	Y	M	
DEPENDENCE	Level of control exerted by local government by imposing a set of accountability parameters	NPO is autonomous from local government in terms of control measures	24 (16%)				20 (13%)				21 (14%)				65
			1	8	12	3	3	7	9	1	5	4	4	8	
		NPO is relatively dependent on local government in terms of control measures	3 (2%)				7 (5%)				23 (15%)				33
			2	0	1	0	5	0	0	2	14	3	2	4	
		NPO is heavily dependent on local government in terms of control measures	2 (1%)				9 (6%)				36 (25%)				47
			1	0	0	1	6	1	1	1	20	1	13	2	
	Total		29				36				80				145

Table 2 - Relations of Flemish NPOs to local governments in terms of contacts and control pressure (scores for total sample and for each of the four policy domains under study)

Finally, when looking at the in-between positions, we see that 13% of all NPOs are not controlled by local government, but still are relatively close to local politicians or to local administrations. We also notice that 23 organizations (15% of our sample) is relatively dependent upon local government in terms of control while also maintaining very close contacts with local politicians and local administrations. The largest share within this group (14 out of 23) does belong to the poverty policy domain.

All the results taken together, we can conclude that there are large variations between Flemish NPOs in terms of their relationships with local government: we can observe cases in the situations of separate autonomy, integrated autonomy and integrated dependence, in terms of Kuhnle and Selle's typology. This observation concurs with the findings of Henriksen (2007), who describes cases in all four possible positions of the typology, but who simultaneously argues that many of the Danish organizations in his study are moving in the direction of more nearness and dependence towards government. Also in our case, we observe that a majority of the NPOs are rather close to local government in terms of their contacts with local politicians and civil servants. Jeremy Vincent and Jenny Harrow (2005), using survey-data of Scottish and English NPOs in the field of health, observed that almost three out of four English organizations considered themselves as being independent from central government. Scottish respondents were more divided, with almost half of the NPOs considering themselves as rather dependent upon central government. Also, nearly three quarters of both Scottish and English NPOs reported a perception of nearness to central government. These figures are rather similar to what we observe for the Flemish case, with most NPOs in a situation of 'integration', with varying levels of dependence on local government. Contrary to the Flemish, Danish and English and Scottish cases, Kolaric and Rakar (2007) observed for the Slovenian case that, at a sectoral level, the relationship between the nonprofit sector and government could still mainly be classified as a situation of separate autonomy.

2.6 Discussion and conclusion

We conclude with a discussion on (1) the empirical findings (first research question) which also enable us to refine the original typology, and (2) the policy relevance of our findings (second research question).

2.6.1 A refined typology for systematizing empirical results

We acknowledge that this study has its limitations. We are aware that we only surveyed 'one side' (NPO executives), although we argued that this choice is valid for our research purposes. Our approach to the topic offers a good starting point to study some of the key aspects of the relationships private nonprofit organizations develop with governments in contemporary welfare states. Our approach allows us to analyze data from a large sample of NPOs, and to make some descriptive statements about how the field of NPOs in the Flemish welfare sector interacts with government.

Although the results presented in table 1 and table 2 are not completely similar, which is due to the fact that organizational dependence was measured in two ways (financing and control, see also Henriksen, 2007), we observe a comparable distribution of cases in both tables. As a result, our research enables us to add some refinements to the original framework of Kuhnle and Selle. Having used variables (contact, finance and control) that consist of three positions instead of two positions in the initial typology, and having combined these variables (contact vs. finance and contact vs. control), enables us to propose a typology with nine positions (see figure 2). Our evidence shows that most Flemish NPOs situate themselves in five positions of the refined typology: integrated dependence, integrated autonomy, semi-integrated autonomy and integrated semi-autonomy and separate autonomy.

		In terms of communication and contact		
		Large distance	Intermediate distance	Small distance
In terms of finances and control	Independence	Separate autonomy	Semi-integrated autonomy	Integrated autonomy
	Intermediate (In)dependence	Separate semi-autonomy	Semi-integrated semi-autonomy	Integrated semi-autonomy
	Dependence	Separate dependence	Semi-integrated dependence	Integrated dependence

Figure 2 – New typology of government-nonprofit relationships

Respectively 74 out of 140 (table 1) and 80 out of 140 (table 2) of the NPOs under study are able to maintain very close contacts with local social policy makers. This implies that more than half of all Flemish NPOs under study are already well-integrated with local government, through the use of regular contacts and

communication with both local politicians and local administrations. Still, we can differentiate in this group of well-integrated NPOs by looking at the extent to which they are dependent on local government (financially, or in terms of control): some are very autonomous, while others are very dependent. Another cluster of NPOs (approximately 15% of our sample) that are very integrated with local government, are only 'relatively' dependent upon local funding or control pressure exerted by local government. We could call this a position of *'integrated semi-autonomy'* (see figure 2). This implies that NPOs develop close relationships and contacts with local policy makers, but equally have to attribute organizational time and effort to deal with other governmental levels that are important sources of financing (mostly but not always the regional Flemish government).

Furthermore, we notice that a relatively large group of organizations does not develop any relationship at all with local government. The majority of this group is in a position of *separate autonomy*: being not dependent on government in terms of finance and control, and having no contacts with the local governmental level. Finally, one group of NPOs are very autonomous from local government, but still develop relatively close contacts with local politicians or local administrations. We could call this position *'semi-integrated autonomy'* (see figure 2). We could thus argue that the absence of a financial (or control) relationship does not necessarily entails the absence of all communication and contact between NPOs and local government.

The other three positions in the typology that were added in comparison with the original Kuhnle and Selle typology – which we call separate semi-autonomy, semi-integrated semi-autonomy and semi-integrated dependence (see figure 2) – are mainly theoretical, as we hardly observe NPOs in these positions (at least in our case).

When comparing NPOs belonging to the four different policy domains, we see that most organizations that are active in elderly care find themselves in a position of independence towards local government. Still, in the group of elderly care organizations, and despite the independence from local government, there is variation what the contacts with local government is concerned. Also many youth care organizations seems to be independent from local government as they receive very little financial support and face low control pressures. But also here, we observe variation in terms of contacts with local government. This position should not surprise, as we know that NPOs in youth care and elderly care mainly develop an organizational focus towards a higher governmental (e.g. the regional Flemish) level: they are mainly financed and controlled by the federal and regional (Flemish) government. This can reduce the local government's capacity and legitimacy to urge

these NPOs to also invest in developing additional relationships at the local governmental level, which explains that some of these NPOs are in a situation of 'separate autonomy'. In the case of special youth there is also the scale of operations that explains the lesser bonds with local government: NPOs in youth care often work on a scale that is larger than the scale of the local government, serving young people from a larger region than the municipality in which the NPO is located.

Organizations in the other two policy domains under study in this article, fighting poverty and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities, are reporting significant higher levels of integration and cooperation with local government, even if they are not always fully dependent upon local government in terms of finance and control. Especially organizations within the poverty policy domain report very close contacts and open lines of communication with local policy makers. For the group of organizations active in the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities we see that a substantial part reports very close contacts while also maintaining their autonomy from local government (integrated autonomy). This could be explained by the fact that, especially in larger municipalities (which are the scope of this article), these policy domains could be seen as politically salient policy fields (poverty and integration of ethnic minorities), making it more logical and necessary for both NPOs and local governments to establish a form of cooperation in solving day-to-day needs. As a matter of fact, hardly any organization was observed in the situation of 'separate dependence'.

2.6.2 Implications for the implementation of central governmental policy towards local government – NPO cooperation

The fact that we rely on survey-data derived from a standardized questionnaire may limit our understanding of the dynamics of local government-NPO interactions. We acknowledge that we do not offer results of longitudinal research, which makes testing the effect of the Decree (central government) on local policy practice (NPO – local government cooperation) not possible. We can, however, add to the discussion by looking at the circumstances of current (perception of) practice of NPO-government relations, and thus make some statements about the likelihood that the ideas of central governmental policy initiatives will be reflected in the local practice, or not.

As discussed above, the Decree on Local Social Policy (2004) aims at maximizing accessibility of social service delivery to citizens at the local, and hence closest, governmental level by establishing a strong cooperation between NPOs and local

government in every municipality. Starting from their coordinating role, local governments must thus establish a process of interaction, information exchange and sufficient levels of communication. In terms of Kuhnle and Selle, this would imply the establishment of a relative degree of integration with service delivering NPOs active on their territory. We found that this integration (in terms of contacts between NPOs and local decision-makers) is quite well developed for most NPOs, despite the fact that local governments often lack the means (mainly financial) to offer incentives for NPOs to be engaged in their local social policy (Verschuere & De Rynck, 2010, cf. also supra). Whether this large integration is the result of the prescriptions of the Decree is not clear however: NPOs and local governments may have other incentives to cooperate, like mutual dependence in politically salient fields for example. However, based on our findings, we can conclude that current practice of NPO-local government relations at least offers some fertile grounds for increasing the engagement of NPOs in local social policy in Flanders. According to our data, most NPOs perceive their relation with local government as being 'near' (having contacts with administrative and/or political local decision-makers). The fact that most NPOs are not dependent on local government for their financial resources, however, may continue to be a serious impediment to be engaged, as there are few possibilities for local governments to financially incentivize NPOs to cooperate in local social policy. We found that as soon as Flemish NPOs receive public funding from local government, albeit a relatively small part of their total budget, and face the control measures attached to these funds, these NPOs also start to establish and maintain contacts with local government.

2.7 References

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2.8 Annex: Composition of research sample of Flemish NPOs

	N population	N sample	% sample	Thematic activities of NPOs in respective policy domains
Total sample	796	255	100%	
Poverty	322	107	42,20%	This policy domain consists of organizations for general welfare (CAW); organizations where poor raise their voice; community development; social economy initiatives; social housing companies; and finally organizations which provide material and social services to people who live in poverty (food, clothes, judicial support, leisure activities, etc)
Elderly care	184	45	17,60%	This policy domain consists of rest houses; organizations that deliver nursery services at home; and organizations which organize leisure activities for elderly people
Special youth care	189	73	28,50%	This policy domain consists of residential services for minors (shelters, etc); educational support for families; foster services; and organizations that promote the welfare of vulnerable children
Ethnic-cultural minorities	101	30	11,70%	This policy domain consists of organizations that guide ethnic-cultural minorities to obligatory language lessons; organizations that learn integrate ethnic-cultural minorities to integrate in civil society; and organizations that provide material and social services to ethnic-cultural minorities (food, clothes, judicial support, leisure activities, etc)

Chapter 3

Public-nonprofit partnerships: does public funding affect the autonomy of nonprofit decision making?

Abstract

Private nonprofit organizations (NPO) involved in publically funded welfare programs face the challenge of maintaining autonomy in their strategic decision-making processes. In this article we study the extent to which NPO managers perceive this autonomy vis-à-vis government in defining the NPO's mission, their working procedures, the target groups to be served and the results to be achieved. Empirical evidence is taken from a large-N sample of 250 NPOs engaged in social welfare provision in Belgium. Our findings suggest that public resource dependence does have a negative impact on the perception of NPOs about the level of organizational autonomy. Still, we will argue that, when looking at the relative share of public income in the NPO's total budget, the nature and intensity of the consultation process between government and NPO and some measures of organizational capacity, this picture is less black and white than presumed.

3.1 Introduction

In contemporary welfare states, governments increasingly rely on private actors for delivering public welfare services to citizens (Snavely & Desai, 2001; Salamon, Sokolowski & Associates, 2004; Anheier, 2005). Due to their grassroots bottom-up nature and rather small scale of operation, NPOs have become an appealing partner for public policy makers. The argument is that NPOs, by their nature, have greater opportunities for tailoring services to clients' needs and are better able to influence local social behavior as well (Salamon, 1995; Boris & Steuerle, 1999). For governments that engage with nonprofit actors, the key challenge then becomes one of ensuring that NPOs remain publically accountable for the deployment of sometimes very substantial public funds. Still, this may not reap some of the indisputable benefits attributed to NPOs' activities, which to a large extent derive from their flexibility and autonomy of not just being another arm of government (Huxham, 1995; Boyle & Butler, 2003). This article approaches the above issues of NPOs' accountability and autonomy from the perspective of NPOs involved in publically funded welfare programs. A large of amount of scholarship has already focused on the impact of governmental interference on the NPOs' functioning and autonomy, but this discussion remains far from being settled (Toepler, 2010). Generally speaking, there seem to be two opposing perspectives in the debate on the impact of close relations between the government and nonprofits. Or, as Jung and Moon (2007) argue, the dependence on public resource can be seen as a double-edged sword for many NPOs. In a more positive view public resources can help NPOs to scale up their activities by ensuring financial stability and institutional legitimacy as being a preferred partner for policy implementation (Salamon, 1995; Froelich, 1999). In a more negative view, involvement with governmental funding programs, and the control measures and bureaucratic pressures attached to it, can lead to goal displacement for NPOs and unintentional effects on the choice of programs and clientele. An over large dependence on the government might thus diminish the NPOs' flexibility to respond to societal needs (Gjems-Onstad, 1990; Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Gronbjerg, 1991; Kirk & Kutchins, 1992; Gronbjerg, 1993; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Anheier, Toepler & Sokolowski, 1997; Jung & Moon, 2007; Nikolic & Koontz, 2007; Gazley, 2010; Never, 2011). In the remainder of this article, we first discuss the research topic and questions. Next we present some hypotheses. Thirdly, we discuss our method and the measurement of the variables in this study. Part four deals with the empirical results, and we close with a discussion of these results.

3.2 Research topic and research questions

The objective of this article is to study two related research questions. *The first question is about the extent to which NPO managers perceive their organizations as being autonomous from the government in their strategic decision making.* This perception of organizational autonomy can give us an indication of the extent to which NPOs perceive their ability to maintain their flexibility to respond to new needs, as this is one of the core characteristics for which they are valued by the government (Salamon, 1987). A second objective is to test whether or not resource dependence on governmental subsidies impedes this autonomy. *Our second research question is then: does governmental funding of NPOs lead to less autonomy in strategic decision making?*

These research questions are particularly relevant in a country like Belgium, an example of a contemporary Western welfare state in which governments offer a significant amount of resources to nonprofit organizations in return for public service delivery (Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999; Anheier, 2005). In the introduction we argue that the debate on the impact of public resource dependence on the NPOs' autonomy is far from being settled. In the nonprofit literature we can observe two main perspectives (Toepler, 2010). One perspective sees a positive relationship between the government and private nonprofits for the purpose of public service delivery: in many Western welfare states (such as Belgium but also many other countries) the post-World War II influx of government monies enabled a significant scaling up of nonprofit activity that catapulted the sector to its current position of prominence in social service delivery to citizens (Salamon, 1995). Accordingly, NPOs have gained financial stability and increased their institutional legitimacy as a preferred partner for policy implementation (Froelich, 1999). Still, although public funding seems to have enabled NPOs to broaden their scope of activities, questions may arise concerning the concrete impact of governmental interference on the NPOs' working methods and procedures. Therefore, a second perspective in the literature has focused on the effects of governmental support on the culture, structure and behavior of nonprofit organizations (Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Empirical research supports this latter perspective: maintaining a close relationship with the government, especially in terms of public funding, can have a negative impact on the NPOs' capacity and willingness to perform a radar function in civil society and thereby raise a critical voice to advocate the interests of their constituents (Chavez, Stephens & Galaskiewicz, 2004; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007; Nicholson-Crotty, 2007; Schmid, Bar & Nirel, 2008). In general terms, Salamon (1995) points to 'vendorism', or the fact that the NPO's initial mission statement could be distorted in the pursuit of governmental support. Throughout the academic literature several studies have been conducted in

order to examine the impact of governmental interference on the NPOs mission and other strategic decisions. Anheier et. al. (1997) did not ask nonprofit managers about their perception of organizational dependence, but tried to solicit assessments and strategic reactions in crisis situations. They found that managers whose organizations are financially dependent on the government (e.g. government funding representing more than half of the total budget) typically prefer rather state-oriented strategies. Stone (1989) found that the type of planning within NPOs is equally related to the type of funding source. This is due to the fact that NPOs may lack direct control over resource flows and therefore operate in an uncertain environment (Stone, Bigelow & Crittendsen, 1999). It is argued that features and preferences of these external resource providers will affect different components of the NPOs strategic management, such as the strategy formulation or the strategy content, and tempts NPOs to shift away from their original mission in order to cope with actual or perceived funder priorities (Wolch, 1990; Tober, 1991). Furthermore, Froelich (1999) found that funding authorities, and especially governments, might exert pressure on the NPOs to change some of their internal processes. In that respect it has been claimed that government interference has influenced the choice of clientele, as funding has frequently been contingent on efforts to broaden target groups in social services (Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Kirk & Kutchins, 1992; Smith, 2010). In a similar vein, Gronbjerg (1991) found that public agencies explicitly attempt to control program choices in social service organizations. Through a longitudinal case study of collaborative partnerships in the environmental area, Nicolic and Koontz (2007) showed that government involvement may impact organizational resources, issue definition, organizational structure and internal decision making processes. Another study, conducted by Jung and Moon (2007), showed that Korean cultural NPOs are constrained by public funding, particularly in goal setting, resource allocation and program choices.

3.3 Hypotheses on NPOs' autonomy vis-à-vis government

In order to be able to pursue sufficient levels of organizational autonomy, NPOs must take into account both external and internal factors. From a theoretical point of view, the application of resource dependence theory and resource mobilization theory may be helpful here in explaining the autonomy of NPOs in strategic decision making. First, there is a set of external factors that are related to the characteristics of the relationships NPOs develop with governments at the national (federal), the regional (Flemish) and the local level. These relationships are primarily characterized by public funding streams, but also through the accountability requirements attached to these

funds (Anheier, 2005; Toepler, 2010). Both variables are important as they tell us something about the way in which and the extent to which NPOs are controlled and steered by government. These relational characteristics can be linked to a resource dependence framework in order to explain the observed levels of autonomy. In general, resource dependence theory suggests that organizations often become dependent on their environments for resources that are critical for their survival, and this generates uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Acquiring and maintaining adequate resources requires an organization to interact with individuals and groups that control resources. In that respect, the organizations are not totally autonomous entities pursuing desired ends at their own discretion, but are rather constrained by the environment as a consequence of their resource needs (Froelich, 1999). Hence, we argue that NPOs will be less likely to pursue full autonomy in making strategic decisions as they might fear losing legitimacy in the eyes of their (public) dominant funding source. This leads to our first hypothesis: *NPOs that develop a close relationship with governments, especially in terms of public funding and the accountability pressure associated with it, will report lower levels of organizational autonomy vis-à-vis these governments.*

A second set of factors is related to the NPO's internal capacity to pursue its autonomy. By relying on ideas from resource mobilization theory, we could argue that the pursuit of autonomy is positively related to organizational capacity (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Child & Gronbjerg, 2007). This organizational capacity could be measured in terms of organizational budget and workforce, two key resources that are applied in organizations to fulfill tasks or achieve the mission. A certain level of capacity is needed if the organization wants to be able to fulfill task and achieve mission. Such capacity will allow organizations to start mobilizing and communicate within their internal and external environments in order to perform the roles and mission they have set out for themselves (e.g. service delivery, defending the interest of their clients to policy makers, etc.). In other words, having sufficient capacity will allow the organizations to better pursue their initial mission and strategic goals through day to day practice. This results in a second hypothesis: *NPOs that have more internal capacity in terms of budget, (professionalized) staff and volunteers, will report higher levels of autonomy vis-a-vis governments*.

3.4 Research method and measurement of variables

3.4.1 Data collection

Our units of analysis are service-delivering NPOs active in four areas of current welfare policy in Flanders that received increased governmental attention in recent years: the field of poverty reduction, elderly care, youth care; and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities. Having listed all organizations active in these 'booming' service areas, we then started to further delineate our population. First, we limited ourselves to those organizations that have a permanent and formal character. This was reflected in the presence of paid staff. We recognize that purely voluntary organizations do play an important role in vitalizing contemporary civil societies. However, given the particular aim of this article (determining levels of NPOs autonomy), we only selected the more professionalized service agencies that have been able to develop long-term relationships with policy makers under the third party government regime in Flanders. Secondly, the selected NPOs also have a private character. The fact that they receive large amounts of their income from public authorities may thus not prevent them from being self-governed as private entities. This implies that all public service providers in these areas were deleted from the population. Thirdly, we only selected one particular legal type of organizations, the so-called 'associations without for-profit motives' (known as VZWs – *Verenigingen Zonder Winstoogmerk* - in Flanders). This is the dominant legal form in the Flemish nonprofit sector (and especially in the domain of welfare), and implies that these organizations are legally bounded by the non-distribution constraint. Finally, we limited ourselves to organizations that are active in one of the thirteen biggest cities in Flanders, being the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. It is important to acknowledge that, especially in a densely populated region such as Flanders, these urban NPOs do not limit their activities to the city in which they are established but also perform a pivotal role in attracting and serving customers and citizens from surrounding areas as well. Furthermore, many of the societal issues dealt with in the selected policy domains, especially poverty reduction and the integration of ethnic-cultural minorities, are predominately typical urban phenomena in Flanders. Finally, and based on the above criteria, we identified an initial research population of almost 800 private nonprofit organizations active in an urban context and spread over the four policy domains being studied in this article. For a more detailed view of the composition of these sectors, we refer to Appendix 1.

The data used in this study are collected via a questionnaire that was sent to the CEOs of these organizations. A total of 255 organizations responded, resulting in a sample of 44 in elderly care, 30 in ethnic-cultural minorities, 73 in special youth care, and 108 in poverty policy care (also see Appendix 1). We acknowledge that we only have a

response of 33% (255 responses from a population of 796 organizations to which the survey was sent). The relative distribution of the four sectors in the sample is similar to the relative distribution of the sectors in the total population (see Appendix 1), which makes our sample fairly representative in terms of sectoral distribution. We also analyzed for non-response bias. We compared (via ANOVA) the scores on the dependent variable (index of autonomy, see Appendix 4) between the early respondents and the late respondents (those who responded after reminders). The analyses show that there are no significant differences in terms of autonomy between either group of respondents. Although care is needed, this could be an indication that the group of non-respondents too would show a similar distribution on the variable of autonomy, compared to the early and late respondents.

3.4.2 Measuring organizational autonomy

A first set of questions in our survey deals with the relationship between the government and NPOs in terms of both actors' impact in the strategic decision making of the NPO. This is what we call 'organizational autonomy' in strategic decision making. We rely on a definition of autonomy as 'the organization's freedom from both internal and external constraints to formulate and pursue self-determined plans and purposes' (Stainton, 1994). We selected four concrete strategic organizational decisions in which this autonomy is reflected. All variables were pre-tested and validated through pilot-interviews with NPO managers in order to verify if these indicators were seen as meaningful in the eyes of the practitioners. These four strategic decisions were: the extent to which NPOs may act autonomously from the government in defining their mission, their target groups, the results to be achieved and the processes through which these results must be obtained (Verhoest, Roness, Verschuere, Rubeckson & MacCarthaigh, 2010; Elbers & Schulpen, 2011).

These decisions all reflect a part of the NPO's identity and could give us an indication about the NPO's ability to meet both internal and external challenges in a flexible way (Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Gronbjerg, 1991; Kirk & Kutchins, 1992; Jung & Moon, 2007; Nicolic & Koontz, 2007; Smith, 2010; Varda, 2011). NPO managers were asked to give a perception of organizational autonomy vis-à-vis government on these four separate issues on a five-point scale. The lowest score on this scale (1) indicates that the government alone decides on these issues, while the highest score (5) reflects a situation in which NPOs make autonomous decisions without any governmental interference at all. The scores in between indicate the relative role of the government and the nonprofit organizations in deciding on these strategic issues, with varying degrees of mutual impact. The results for the observed levels of organizational autonomy are presented in table 1. For the measurement of the dependent variable

we thus rely on NPO managers' self-reported data, on how they perceive the autonomy of their NPO vis-à-vis government in deciding on strategic organizational issues. Also we did not ask them to specify the governmental level to which they are autonomous (or not), because it is our aim to find evidence concerning the autonomy of an NPO vis-à-vis government in general, and not about the interference of specified governments at different levels.

3.4.3 Measuring resource dependence

We first asked NPO managers to indicate the relative shares of different revenue sources comprising their total budget. It must be noted, however, that under the third-party government regime in Flanders, these public funds are generally provided as long-term subsidies to the organizations in our sample. Descriptive statistics show that the Flemish government is by far the most important source of income. In fact, more than three out of five of all NPOs in our sample receive more than half of their budget from the regional Flemish government. This also implies that both the federal and the local governments do only play a role as a supplementary funding source for most NPOs. For a more detailed view on the NPOs' revenue structure we refer to Appendix 2. Secondly, we also questioned the NPO executives about the accountability requirements that were attached to these funds. In a narrow view, accountability could be defined as the answerability to a higher authority in a bureaucratic or inter-organizational chain of command (Kearns 1996). Such a definition reveals three fundamental questions: *who* is accountable (NPOs), *to whom* (upward accountability towards government) and *for what* (Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006; Candler & Dumont, 2010; Verbruggen, Christiaens & Milis, 2011). In the context of this article it is especially the latter question that deserves further attention, because the parameters to which NPOs must adhere give us an indication of the nature of their relationship with the government. Based on a literature review and pilot interviews with managers within all subsectors of our sample, we selected six parameters: the need to provide reports on the financial performance of the NPO; the obligation to follow specified administrative procedures; requirements to ensure the quality of the services the NPO delivers; requirements about the quantity (number of services) of the NPO's service delivery; demands for serving specific groups within civil society (target audience); and finally the need to report on the social effects that are made possible through their services (outcomes) [7]. Descriptive results (see Appendix 2) show that most NPOs are primarily held accountable by the Flemish government.

[7] This variable already consists of two categories: "my organization is not held accountable on this parameter" (0) and "my organization is held accountable on this parameter" (1).

3.4.4 Measuring organizational capacity to mobilize resources

In our study, organizational capacity is measured in two different ways. First, we looked at the size of the organization, measured in terms of the organization's total budget. In this regard we note that less than 20% of all NPOs can be considered as rather small organizations (budget less than € 100,000). However, almost 40% of the NPOs have a budget higher than € 1,000,000, and hence are labeled in our sample as large organizations. Secondly, we rely on the organization's workforce as a measure of organizational capacity. On the one hand, in terms of professionalized staff (Full Time Equivalents or FTEs), we see that more than one third of all NPOs are rather small organizations (less than five FTEs); while only 14% are larger ones (more than 50 FTEs). On the other hand, workforce is also measured as the number of volunteers active within an organization. Six out of ten organizations in our sample do (at least partly) rely on the efforts of volunteers, but in only 16% of the cases are there more than five volunteers active in the organization.

3.5 Results

3.5.1 The observed levels of NPO autonomy

As mentioned earlier, we selected four strategic organizational decisions that could give us an indication of different aspects of the NPOs' autonomy: the extent to which NPOs may act autonomously from the government in defining their mission, their target groups, the results to be achieved and the processes through which these results must be obtained. Table 1 shows the descriptive results for a total sample of 236 NPOs regarding their organizational autonomy in making strategic decisions.

Only 10% of the organizations in our sample indicate that the government is the only or the dominant actor in deciding on the NPO's *mission and goals*. For approximately 30% of the NPOs, defining the organization's mission statement is the result of a consultation between NPO and the government as equal partners, implying both actors have a strong role. The results thus show that 61% of all NPOs see themselves as being the dominant, or even the only, actor in deciding on mission and goals. In the view of almost one in four NPOs, the government is the only or the dominant force in defining the *target groups* the organizations primarily have to serve. Furthermore more than one third of all NPOs hereby report cooperation between equal partners. This leaves us with somewhat more than 40% of cases in which the NPO is dominant or may act with full independence in setting the target groups.

	Mission and goals		Target groups		Work processes		Results to be obtained	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Only government is involved in making this decision (score 1)	7	3,00%	16	6,80%	1	0,40%	12	5,10%
Government and NPO decide together but government is dominant (score 2)	18	7,60%	40	17%	8	3,40%	49	20,90%
Government and NPO decide as equal partners (score 3)	67	28,40%	83	35,10%	64	27,20%	94	40%
Government and NPO decide together but NPO is dominant (score 4)	72	30,50%	59	25,10%	102	43,30%	46	19,60%
Only NPO is involved in making this decision (score 5)	72	28,20%	37	15,70%	60	25,20%	34	14,50%

Table 1 – Degree of organizational autonomy in strategic decision making processes

Only a very small share of the NPOs studied (3.4%) reports that the government has authority in deciding on the organization's *working processes*. For somewhat more than one in four organizations these internal procedures on how to organize service delivery are established as a collaborative effort by equal actors. Still, in almost 70% of the cases, it is the NPOs, either following consultation with the government or even completely autonomously, that decide on these issues. Finally, we see that for 25% of organizations the government is the dominant actor in defining the *results* the NPO has to achieve. Yet it is also noted that for 40% of all NPOs this decision is made as a result of joint effort between equal partners. This implies that approximately one in three NPOs are able to decide themselves, either following consultation with the government or autonomously, on the results they want to achieve through their service delivery.

3.5.2 Which factors have an impact on organizational autonomy?

To answer the second research question, and because of the non-metric scales through which most variables were measured, a series of ANOVA tests is being conducted. This will allow us to determine variables that might restrain the NPOs'

ability to act autonomously. Accordingly, we are conducting additional tests in order to further analyze the significant relationships between our dependent and independent variables: post hoc Scheffe for variables consisting of three or more categories and Mann-Whitney tests for variables consisting of only two categories. A first set of independent variables is related to the extent to which NPOs are receiving income from public authorities or not, and the accountability requirements attached to this governmental funding. In this respect we primarily rely on insights from resource dependence theory. We will also test a second set of independent variables that are related to a resource mobilization framework, and give us an indication of the organizational capacity to collect resources that allow them to function: the NPO's total budget, the number of (professionalized) staff and the presence of volunteers. Finally, we use the sector as a control variable in order to compare perceptions of organizational autonomy between the four subsectors in our sample.

As we also discussed before, the autonomy of NPOs is measured by questioning respondents about their perception of strategic autonomy in four management decisions: defining the organizational mission and goals; determining the target groups; defining the results to be obtained; and determining the processes through which these results must be achieved. A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on these four items with orthogonal rotation (varimax). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO = .712). Bartlett's test of sphericity (chi-square = 248,799, $p < .000$) indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain Eigenvalues for each component in the data. Here just one component was found to explain 58.08% of the total variance (see also table in Appendix 4). In other words, this analysis allows us to state that all four items refer to only one underlying construct (NPOs' perception of autonomy in making strategic decisions). All NPOs in our total sample are therefore given a unique factor score, which may tell us something about their autonomy in taking strategic organizational decisions. These factor scores will thus serve as dependent variables in the ANOVA test.

		Anova (Sign)	Post Hoc Scheffe	Mann-Whitney test
Public revenues				
	Federal income	.529	-	-
	Flemish income	**.003**	No share> High (.011)	-
	Local Income	.467	-	-
Accountability requirements				
Federal	Service quantity	.619	-	-
	Service quality	.247	-	-
	Financial reporting	.766	-	-
	Administrative reports	.946	-	-
	Target Audience	.851	-	-
	Social Effects	.928	-	-
Flemish	Service quantity	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.001)
	Service quality	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.000)
	Financial reporting	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.003)
	Administrative reports	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.010)
	Target Audience	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.001)
	Social Effects	**.000**	-	No > Yes (.001)
Local	Service quantity	.113	-	-
	Service quality	.214	-	-
	Financial reporting	.190	-	-
	Administrative reports	.949	-	-
	Target Audience	.856	-	-
	Social Effects	.280	-	-
Organizational Capacity				
	Total budget	.694	-	-
	Paid workforce (FTE)	.614	-	-
	Volunteers (FTE)	**.002**	High>Low (.006)	-
	Sector	.605		

Table 2 – Results for bivariate analysis between independent variables and NPOs' autonomy (dependent variable) by means of One-Way Anova

The results of these tests are presented in table 2. All values reflecting a statistically significant relationship between two variables ($p < .010$), are marked in bold. In the first column we see the results of the ANOVA test. It seems that our dependent variable (NPOs' autonomy) is related to a considerable number of the factors being studied: the amount of income from the Flemish government (significant at .003); the extent to which the NPOs are held accountable by the Flemish government (all six Flemish accountability parameters are significant at .000); and the number of volunteers (significant at .002). When considering the above associations we also conducted a series of additional tests (post hoc Scheffe for variables with three or more categories and Mann-Whitney tests for the binary variables) in order to specify the associations between these dependent and independent variables. These results are shown in the second and third column of table 2. When considering the first independent variable (income from the Flemish government) associated with the NPOs' perception of autonomy, we notice that NPOs that do not receive any income from the Flemish government report higher levels of organizational independence in strategic decision making processes. Or, in other words, receiving income from this particular source of revenues does indeed hamper the NPOs' autonomy. This is shown in fourth column of this table (Post Hoc test).

In a similar vein, when considering the accountability requirements attached to these public funds, we found that NPOs that are not held accountable by the Flemish government also have a higher ability to act autonomously. As shown in the last column of table 2, we found this effect for all six Flemish accountability parameters studied in this article (significance for these parameters ranges from .000 to .010). Results for the second set of independent variables (measures for organizational capacity) are slightly more ambiguous to interpret. The main finding is that NPOs that do rely more on volunteers report higher levels of organizational autonomy in strategic decision making (see Post Hoc Test for this variable which is significant at .006). Furthermore, it is worth noticing that no effect was found for other control variables such as the number of FTEs and the NPO's total budget on the NPO's perception of autonomy.

Finally, we also analyzed whether or not differences in autonomy of NPOs vis-à-vis government do occur among the four policy domains being studied in this article. When comparing perceptions of organizational autonomy on all four strategic decisions together (the unique factor score resulting from the factor analysis, see Appendix 4) we found no significant differences between the four subsectors studied

in this article: there are thus no differences observed between organizations from different sectors in terms of their autonomy vis-à-vis government[8]. This observation may strengthen the generalizability of our findings, at least with regard to different policy sectors in the same institutional setting.

3.6 Discussion and conclusion

We are aware that this study has its limitations. First, for measuring the dependent variable (organizational autonomy vis-à-vis government in deciding on strategic organizational issues) we strictly rely on self-reported data from NPO managers, which involves the risk of socially desirable answering. Second, we did not specify the governmental level to which NPOs are autonomous (or not). This choice should, however, not be problematic, as it is our aim in this research to say something about the autonomy of an NPO vis-à-vis government in general, and not about the interference of specific governments at different levels. Third, we must be aware of the fact that we relied on some specific criteria (e.g. NPOs established in urban regions, having professionalized workforce and active in four welfare domains in Flanders) to delineate our research sample.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study is able to add to the literature, especially due to its empirical scope (NPOs in a modern welfare state like Belgium). Our findings apply to urban NPOs in a country that is characterized by third party government (NPOs delivering public services on behalf of, and subsidized by, the government in a continental European welfare state). We have studied NPOs that are professionalized (in terms of having paid and specialized staff), are mainly service delivering, and operate in politically salient welfare domains. Our study brings some empirical evidence to the discussion concerning the impact of public resource dependence on the ability of NPOs that build close relationships with the government to maintain sufficient levels of organizational autonomy in strategic decision making.

The main finding of our research, in response to our second research question, is that the NPOs' dependence on public resources seems to have a negative impact on the organizational autonomy to take strategic decisions such as defining the NPOs' mission, the working procedures, the results to be achieved and the target groups to

[8] However, when ANOVA is performed for testing differences between different sectors on the four items of autonomy before factor analysis (see Appendix 4), we find some evidence for elderly care organizations being less autonomous compared to organizations in other sectors, but only terms of being able to define program choices and work processes.

be reached. Starting from a resource dependence framework these findings seem to confirm the assumption that NPOs that have closer financial connections with government, and subsequently face more pressure to adhere to accountability standards imposed by that same government, will report lower levels of organizational autonomy in strategic decision making. This concurs with the work of others, who found that involvement with governmental funding programs, and the control measures and bureaucratic pressures associated with it, can diminish the NPOs' flexibility to make their own strategic choices concerning programs, clients, and desired outcome (Gjems-Onstad, 1990; Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Kirk & Kutchins, 1992; Gronbjerg, 1993; Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Jung & Moon, 2007; Nikolic & Koontz, 2007).

In response to our first research question, the results are mixed. In general, the overall levels of autonomy, as reported by NPOs in our sample, are quite substantial, although there are differences depending on the strategic decision under study. We also found that a considerable number of NPOs report that government and NPOs decide on strategic decisions as equal partners, implying that both actors have a substantial amount of input in the decision made. As a result from this study, we can bring some issues into the discussion: (1) the varying levels of organizational autonomy reported by the NPOs depending on the type of strategic decision under study; (2) the meaning of the relatively high levels of reported cooperation as being totally equal partners; (3) the existence of factors (such as the number of volunteers) that are related to organizational capacity and that might foster the NPOs' ability to maintain their autonomy as well, and (4) the varying impact that different governmental levels have on the NPOs' autonomy due to the amount of (public) income provided.

A first issue that may put our findings into a broader perspective is related to the observation that variations in perceived levels of governmental interference do occur, depending on the type of strategic decision. Governmental actors seem to have much more influence in the decisions about target groups and results to be obtained, compared to the definition of mission and goals, and work processes. For the latter decisions, the NPO is often the dominant decision-maker. Thus, although all four strategic decisions in this study do rely to only one underlying construct (see Appendix 4), there seem to be differences, and further research could examine each strategic decision in more detail in search for explanations for this variation. One explanation could be found in the institutional framework through which government regulates NPOs activities in Flanders. The Flemish government is in many cases the dominant funding source and also the designer of the regulatory framework in which NPOs in the welfare sector function. In these regulatory frameworks, a lot of attention is paid

to the eligible of the services provided by the NPO: what specific target groups are the services for? In all four sectors under scrutiny (poverty, elderly care, minorities and special youth), regulatory frameworks define these target groups in detail. Especially in times of austerity and pressure on subsidies for NPOs, even more attention is paid to whom is eligible for service delivery or not. So we could argue that, via its regulations, government rather focusses on 'outcomes', such as the audience to be serviced but also the quality of the services to be delivered by the NPO, rather than it would intervene in the NPOs 'internal' working procedures or their initial mission statements.

Second, there is the observation that approximately one out of three NPO managers classifies their relationship with the government in strategic decision making as a process between equal partners. This is the case for all four strategic decisions. This suggests that government has an important input in deciding on strategic issues, according to a substantial number of NPOs, and thus is able to reduce organizational autonomy. From a policy relevant point of view, this provides some opportunities in terms of government – NPO cooperation. If both actors consider themselves as equal partners in strategic decision-making, government and NPOs might be able to establish a more profound relationship that paves the way for further cooperation and the development of true partnerships in which policy and practice become increasingly adjusted to one another. This sheds another light on government – NPO relations that goes further than the dichotomy between on the one hand the perspective of governments 'capturing' NPOs, thereby distorting the NPO's initial reasons of existence, and on the other hand the view of NPOs being free-riders that escape from governmental influence although they function in the public domain, providing public services.

A third issue stems from the observation that there is a positive effect of the presence of volunteers in an organization (as a measure of organizational capacity), and the extent to which NPOs are able to maintain their autonomy in making strategic decisions. Referring to resource mobilization theory, we expected that measures of organizational capacity, such as the number of volunteers, would indeed have a positive impact on the NPOs' autonomy due to the fact that these organizations have more motivation and resources to mobilize and to come into action in defending what they standing for (e.g. mission). Regarding the non-paid workforce within an organization, this positive relationship may not only be explained by the fact that the presence of volunteers, as additional workforce, allows the NPOs to be involved in a broader array of activities. It could also be argued that volunteers in an NPO are typically engaged and driven by the mission of that NPO: they are involved because

they believe in the mission and values of that NPO. Hence, these volunteers may act as a kind of 'watchdog', with a strong interest to preserve the NPO's autonomy in defining that mission with regard to other important organizational stakeholders (such as the subsidizing government e.g.). This suggests that explanations of NPOs' autonomy might benefit from taking into account other theoretical frameworks, or variables, than resource dependence alone. We might for example think of variables that are related to organizational capacity (to act independently), or traditions and cultures in the relationship between NPOs and their governmental counterparts (e.g. the level of trust, induced by the extent to which NPOs have direct access to policy makers, and the quality and intensity of these direct contacts).

Finally, one must be aware that the amount of income received from a particular funding source seems to play a role. After all, the NPOs in our sample do receive varying degrees of income from the national (federal), the regional (Flemish) and the local governments. However, not all governmental levels being studied seem to influence the NPOs' autonomy in the same way. The relationship with the regional Flemish government is especially negatively associated with the perception of organizational autonomy, because it is the Flemish government that is indeed the dominant funding source and also regulator for most NPO activities in the four sectors under scrutiny (see table 2). These negative relationships between funding and accountability and autonomy of the NPO are not observed at the federal and the local governmental level. It seems that only when a particular funding source is the dominant one, representing for example more than half of the NPO's total budget, is there an impact on the levels of autonomy in strategic decision making.

To conclude and in sum, our research brings some empirical evidence from a European 'government dominant' country (in terms of Salamon, Anheier & Sokolowski, 1999) into the discussion concerning the impact of public resource dependence on NPOs' autonomy in strategic decision making vis-à-vis government. We found evidence for the claim that dependence on governmental funding may lead to a loss of strategic autonomy by NPOs. Future research however should investigate this assumption further, by bringing other explanations to the research design, by further distinguishing between different strategic decisions and the impacts of different governmental levels, and by further refining measures of the dependent variable of autonomy.

3.7 Appendix

	N population	% population	N sample	% sample	
Total sample	796	100%	255	100%	
Poverty sector	322	40,5%	107	42,2%	This sector consists of organizations for general welfare; organizations where poor raise their voice; social economy; social housing; and organizations which provide material and social services
Elderly care	184	23,0%	45	17,6%	This sector consists of rest houses; organizations that deliver nursery services at home; and organizations that organize leisure activities for elderly people
Youth care	189	24,0%	73	28,5%	This sector consists of residential services for minors (shelters, etc.); educational support; organizations that promote welfare of vulnerable children
Integration of ethnic-cultural minorities	101	12,5%	30	11,7%	This sector consists of organizations that learn ethnic-cultural minorities to integrate in civil society and learn Dutch language; organizations that provide material and social services

Appendix 1 – Composition of research sample of Flemish NPO's

		Categories	N	%
Income (N=236)	Income federal government	No share	152	64,40%
		Less than 50% (low)	65	27,50%
		More than 50% (high)	19	8,10%
	Income Flemish government	No share	40	16,90%
		Less than 50% (low)	76	32,20%
		More than 50% (high)	120	50,80%
	Income local government	No share	97	41,10%
		Less than 50% (low)	117	49,60%
		More than 50% (high)	22	9,30%
Accountability Federal (N=255)	Service Quantity	yes	45	17,60%
	Service Quality	yes	45	17,60%
	Financial reporting	yes	56	22,00%
	Administrative reports	yes	68	26,70%
	Target audience	yes	56	22,00%
	Social effects	yes	35	13,70%
Accountability Flemish (N=255)	Service Quantity	yes	189	74,10%
	Service Quality	yes	182	71,40%
	Financial reporting	yes	184	72,20%
	Administrative reports	yes	191	74,70%
	Target audience	yes	198	76,60%
	Social effects	yes	185	72,60%
Accountability Local (N=255)	Service Quantity	yes	89	34,90%
	Service Quality	yes	88	34,40%
	Financial reporting	yes	86	33,70%
	Administrative reports	yes	79	31,00%
	Target audience	yes	105	41,20%
	Social effects	yes	98	38,40%

Appendix 2 – Descriptive results for independent variables related to characteristics of the relationship with governments

		Categories	N	%
Income (N=236)	Gifts and donations	No share	124	52.5%
		Less than 50% (low)	103	43.6%
		More than 50% (high)	9	3.8%
	Member contributions	No share	201	85.9%
		Less than 50% (low)	33	14.1%
		More than 50% (high)	-	-
	Fees for services (clients)	No share	129	54.7%
		Less than 50% (low)	83	35.2%
		More than 50% (high)	24	10.2%
Size	Total budget 2009 (N=198)	Less than € 100,000 (low)	36	18.2%
		€ 100,000-1,000,000 (moderate)	84	42.4%
		More than € 1,000,000 (high)	78	39.4%
	Total FTE 2009 (N=236)	Less than 5 FTE (low)	82	34.7%
		5-50 FTE (moderate)	120	50.8%
		More than 50 FTE (high)	34	14.4%
	Number of Master Degrees (N=221)	Maximum 1 FTE with Master (low)	93	42.1%
		1-5 FTE with Master (moderate)	90	40.7%
		More than 5 FTE with Master high)	38	17.2%
	Number of Bachelor Degrees (N=223)	Maximum 1 FTE with Bachelor (low)	55	24.7%
		1-5 FTE with Bachelor (moderate)	79	35.4%
		More than 5 FTE with Bachelor (high)	89	39.9%
Volunteers	Number of volunteers (FTE)	No volunteers	85	41.1%
		Less than 5 volunteers (FTE)	88	42.5%
		More than 5 volunteers (FTE)	34	16.4%

Appendix 3 – Descriptive results for independent variables (ANOVA test) related to organizational characteristics

	Cron-bach's Alpha	N	Total Variance Explained	Components with eigen-values > 1	Commu-nalities [1]	Compo-nent Matrix [2]
Autonomy in strategic decision-making	.761	235	58,08%	1		
- Autonomy in defining NPO's mission					.552	.743
- Autonomy in defining the audience to be served by NPO					.726	.852
- Autonomy in defining the processes through which services will be delivered					.577	.759
- Autonomy in defining the results the NPO has to achieve					.498	.706

[1] The extent to which the factor can explain the variance within the different variables

[2] The factor loadings

Appendix 4 - Factor analysis dependent variable

3.8 References

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Chapter 4

Bottom-up networks for welfare provision: getting a grip on processes of social exclusion by evaluating network effectiveness

Abstract

It has been repeatedly stated that the topic of network effectiveness has been often neglected, which has led to some kind of 'network euphoria'. Starting from a case study of bottom-up networks for welfare provision in two Belgian cities, this article provides an examination of the contribution these networks could make in improving the conditions of life of a hard-to-reach group of homeless people facing multiple problems. In order to distill a set of criteria to perform this evaluation, we referred to the introduction of social rights in many Western welfare states. Our findings revealed that these bottom-up networks were able to fill in service gaps and overcome fragmentation of care, but equally maintained thresholds to care and even created new ones.

4.1 Problem statement

In many modern welfare states social rights have obtained a firm place as a framework for steering welfare provision to citizens with the aim of reducing levels of social exclusion. Unlike their civil and political counterparts, social rights are considered as positive rights, which urge for a redistribution of societal resources to enable vulnerable groups within society to obtain more equal opportunities to live a dignified life (Evans, 2002; Roose & De Bie, 2003). This governmental pursuit of social rights and social justice is necessitated as structural inequalities persist at the societal level and to offset a too narrowly defined focus on disciplinary and neo-liberal inspired measures vis-à-vis citizens within contemporary activation states (Lorenz, 2005; Dominelli, 2007; Ife, 2010). Furthermore, due to the increasingly 'wicked' character of contemporary societal problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973), which cut across service areas and policy areas (Alter & Hage, 1993; Clarke & Stewart, 1997), welfare provision has often been organised through partnerships or 'networks' between a range of public and private welfare organisations at the local level (Klijn, 2008; Koliba, Meek & Zia, 2011). In general, these networks are then considered as 'structures of interdependence involving multiple organisations, or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of the others in some larger hierarchical arrangement' (O'Toole, 1997:45). Most often, these networks emerge because it is expected that a 'collaborative advantage' (Vangen & Huxham, 2013) can be realised that could have not been achieved by individual actors working alone.

This article has a particular interest in bottom-up networks, which are not mandated by law and rely on the voluntary commitment of their members (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003). These networks are generally considered as flexible instruments to reduce social exclusion by filling in service gaps (Coussé, Bradt, Roose & De Bie, 2010) through their ability to overcome fragmentation of care (Allen, 2003; Huxham, 2003) and cope with rather unpredictable demands and needs of citizens (Kettl 2009). Nonetheless, in order to counterbalance a current tendency towards 'network euphoria' (Kenis & Provan, 2009: 440) we focus on the often neglected topic of network effectiveness (Bardach, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007) and challenge the assumption that 'joint work' implies 'good work' (Frost, 2005:19). Therefore, this article provides a critical assessment of the actual outcomes of these service delivering networks (Provan, Fish & Swydow, 2007; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, & Vandenbroeck, 2014). Although network effectiveness could be assessed at different levels (Provan & Kenis, 2007; Klijn, 2007), we opt to evaluate the outcomes of networks at the community level, which is understood here as the contribution it

could make in improving the conditions of life of those citizens being targeted and served by the network (Provan & Milward, 2001). As a result, our article has a twofold objective. Our first research (*RQ1*) focuses on concrete practices of bottom-up networks and is formulated as follows: '*Are bottom-up networks able to reduce social exclusion by granting more equal opportunities to vulnerable groups of citizens*?' The second objective is unraveling some of the implications of the analysis of network effectiveness from the perspective of clients themselves, leading to the following research question (*RQ2*): '*What can policy makers and practitioners that are involved in these bottom-up networks learn from an analysis of network effectiveness*?'

In the following section, we will further elaborate on the different levels at which the evaluation of network effectiveness can be performed and substantiate how a social rights' framework could be relevant to distill a set of concrete criteria to perform this evaluation at the level of the community. In essence, these criteria are based upon previous research (Roose & De Bie, 2003) and are expected to allow us to reflect upon networks' practices without necessarily having to question clients themselves (Roose, Mottart, Dejonckheere, van Nijnatten & De Bie, 2009). After presenting our research methodology, we will outline the findings of a double case study on bottom-up networks in two of the largest Flemish cities that look after a vulnerable 'restgroup' of homeless people who are not able or willing to make use of regular care facilities or to obtain a habitation on the (social) housing market and thus have no other options than sleeping rough or in squats. The discussion section will primarily outline whether or not these bottom-up networks are able to reduce levels of social exclusion and realise more equal opportunities for citizens (also see RQ1). Furthermore, we will highlight some of the implications of our own research for both policy makers and practitioners that have an interest in these bottom-up networks (RQ2).

4.2 About the evaluation of network effectiveness

4.2.1 Network effectiveness as a multidimensional variable

The evaluation of network effectiveness has proven to be a complicated task due to the fact that multiple stakeholders might lay a claim on the network (Klijn, 2007). This implies a question about 'effectiveness for whom', because various actors and organisational entities could and will be influenced by the network's behaviour (Provan & Kenis, 2007). Consistent with this multiple stakeholder perspective, we follow Provan and Milward (2001) who argue that networks might be evaluated at three levels of analysis: the network level, the level of individual organisations

participating in the network and the community level. Firstly, effectiveness at the network level relates to the viability of the network and its ability to survive as an autonomous interorganisational entity per se (Provan & Milward, 2001). Hence, effectiveness could then be related to the stability of the network and by analysing the ebb and flow of agencies to and from the network. Moreover, it might also be linked to the extent to which a range of services that are needed by clients are actually collectively produced by network members. Whereas an oversupply of services might be confusing for clients and entails the risk of duplicating efforts, an undersupply might force people to look for yet another alternative provider. Finally, effectiveness at the network level might also be assessed by analysing the strength of ties between a set of interdependent but also autonomously functioning actors. Secondly, at the organisational level, network effectiveness is then about the benefits for each organisation that (voluntarily) invests some of its time and resources on behalf of a common network objective. This implies a motivation that is also partly driven by a self-interest; for example, to acquire resources (monies, expertise, etc.) that are relatively scarce to an organisation, to ameliorate their status and legitimacy towards others as a reliable partner, to reduce costs, and to improve outcomes for their own clients (Provan & Milward, 2001).

However, as mentioned in the previous section, this paper focuses on effectiveness at the broadest level of the community. This is understood as the contribution the network is able to make to the pool of clients it serves or to the communities it tries to reach out to. As such, networks must be evaluated as service-delivery vehicles that provide value to local communities in ways that could have not been achieved through the uncoordinated provision of services by fragmented and autonomous agencies (Huxham, 2003). More importantly, this raises substantial questions about the criteria to rely on when performing this evaluation (Kenis & Provan, 2009). As every criterion could be considered as a valuable norm in itself, Kenis and Provan (2009) admitted that any decision about these criteria inevitably has a normative character. As a result, there is a need for a framework from which a set of criteria could be derived. Below, we will further substantiate our framework by making reference to the debate on social rights as a basis for welfare provision to citizens in many modern welfare states.

4.2.2 Social rights as a framework for welfare provision

Under the influence of international human rights legislation, several European welfare states introduced social rights in the aftermath of the Second World War (Cox, 1998; Dean, 2000). One important debate is then about the actual implementation of these rights at the micro-level of concrete practices. This could be related to the fact

that socio-economic rights, which are considered as positive rights, are rarely given the same status as their negative counterparts such as civil and political rights that boast a much longer tradition in modern societies (Evans, 2002). Hence, while negative rights are fulfilled when members of a community exercise restraint from doing anything that might violate the freedom of others, positive rights require some members of society to provide material means of life to those unable to do this themselves. Not surprisingly, this has initiated a vivid debate about the extent to which societal resources could or should be redistributed to fulfill these social rights.

Under the liberal consensus, it has been strongly acknowledged that social rights cannot lead to an obligation on the part of others to provide those resources. This claim has been supported by the relative scarcity of societal resources and by stressing that social claims are inevitably culturally determined, which makes it impossible to set any universal standards on how to fulfill them (Bole, 1991; Evans, 2002). Nonetheless, others have minimised the perceived differences between positive and negative rights by stating that social rights, such as the right to subsistence, represent the preconditions for civil and political rights to flourish (Shue 1996). Moreover, similar to debates on civil and political rights, it is expected that a reasonable consensus could be established on the level of expenditure a society is willing to take up in order to fulfill social rights (Plant, 1989; Jones, 1994).

4.2.3 Towards a set of criteria to unravel thresholds to care

Starting from this intended redistribution of societal resources, especially to citizens that find themselves in a weak or vulnerable position, we turn our attention to public-private networks as commonly used instruments to organise social welfare provision. According to Scharpf (1997), these networks are characterised by a negotiated rationality and interactions between a set of relatively autonomous actors. Hence, we agree that outcomes of these networks could not be considered as a given but rather ‘a work in progress’ that is continuously shaped and re-shaped through choices and actions made by the actors involved in these networks. This is also related to the fact that network members will have their own routines and preferences about how to carry out services. Still, as they agreed to join forces for collectively dealing with complex societal challenges, they will have to find some degree of convergence. As a result, we must focus on the implicit and explicit rules and predefined standards on which network actors base themselves to regulate the access to and the use of the services that are produced. After all, these rules might lead to thresholds to care and a split of the initial target population between those citizens who are able to obtain access and benefit from services and those who are (still) unable to meet the

standards that are imposed on them. Starting from the introduction of social rights, it is this particular discrepancy that must be problematised in terms of network effectiveness at the community level.

Therefore, we rely on previous research on criteria that are expected to reflect considerations about access to care and taking into account the perspective of those being served (Roose & De Bie, 2003; Maseele, Roose, De Bie& Roets, 2014). In concrete terms, we rely on the following criteria: the availability, usefulness, comprehensibility and affordability of social services (Roose & De Bie, 2003). *Availability* refers to the existence of a supply and the fact that social services can be called upon for matters that do not relate directly to the assessed problem. This is important as demands of clients will not necessarily correspond with the pre-defined supply of care facilities. *Affordability* relates to financial and other (e.g., privacy) costs that a citizen may encounter due to an intervention. *Usefulness* refers to the extent to which the citizen experiences the care as supportive: is the help attuned to the demand, and the skills and the language of the client? *Comprehensibility*, finally, relates to the extent to which citizens are aware of the way in which the problem should be approached and how facilities account for the choices they make and particular approach they rely on.

4.3 Research method

Starting from our main focus on the evaluation of the effectiveness of bottom-up networks as a means to organise welfare provision to hard-to-reach groups within society, we rely on a case study of bottom-up networks that were established in two cities (Kortrijk and Hasselt) in Flanders, the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. We acknowledge that a case study could be a good research strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real life context and for which multiple sources of evidence are used (Robson, 2002).

We argue that homelessness is a good example of a complex social problem as homeless people as a group are not a homogenous population because being homeless entails multiple dimensions (e.g., lack of financial means, psychiatric dysfunction, substance abuse, process of disaffiliation, etc.) (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Larsen, Poortinga, & Hurdle, 2004; European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), 2009; Lee, Tyler & Wright, 2010). This has eventually led to the involvement of various policy fields around this topic, such as welfare, housing, health care, community building, etc., which are subject to different regulations that are not necessarily complementary to one

another. Furthermore, as there is no overall policy around homelessness in Flanders, the networks under study in this article have a voluntarily and bottom-up character (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003) and could be considered as the most relevant instruments to look after a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach group of homeless people that are not yet able or willing to have access to regular service provision.

Primary data were obtained from multiple sources (Yin, 2003), including document analysis, interviews and direct observations. First, we conducted a document analysis by focusing on the meeting reports of councils of local government in Kortrijk and Hasselt, the agenda and meeting reports of the steering committee of the networks, strategic notes directed to the city council, yearly evaluation reports of projects (e.g., night shelter), memos generated by network members, etc. Secondly, we conducted a series of 25 semi-structured interviews in Kortrijk and Hasselt with representatives of local government and the private welfare organisations that could be considered as formal members of the network and regularly participated in network meetings or had a stake in the development of its operational projects. This allowed us to assess network participant's views on and interpretations of particular actions and events (Walsham, 1995). Respondents represented different professional disciplines and sectors (e.g., primary line of care, mental health care, addiction care, street corner work, etc.), different internal positions (because the steering group and different working groups of these networks consisted of both fieldworkers and managers) and different legal nature (e.g., public servants of local government vs. employees of private welfare organisations). Finally, we were able to get to know the cases from the inside by site visits (e.g., by getting a tour in the night shelter or a welfare organisation after having conducted an interview) and by regularly attending meetings of the steering committee or by attending a meeting of a case consultation as an observer.

In order to analyse our data, we relied on a qualitative content analysis, which is a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). We opted to conduct a directed content analysis, which is generally based upon a theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Starting from our initial research focus as it was outlined above, these codes were derived from a framework in which the accessibility, availability, usefulness, etc. of the welfare services for citizens was of central concern.

4.4 Research findings

In this article, the focus is on two particular initiatives that were developed in a rather similar way by the networks in both Kortrijk and Hasselt: the creation of a night shelter on the one hand, and case consultations on the other. The meaning and functioning of these projects will be elaborated below.

4.4.1 Night shelter

In general, a night shelter must be considered as an additional residential supply, targeting those people who have no other option than living in squats or sleeping rough (also see scenario 1 in Figure 1). This is because they lack a (rental) house of their own, could or would no (longer) have access to residential care facilities or cannot rely (anymore) on a proper social network (e.g., friends, family) to stay at their place for a period of time. In both cases under study, the night shelter is a joint network initiative and has been financed by public means. Whereas the yearly budget in Hasselt amounts 20.000€ and is solely provided by local government[9], the night shelter in Kortrijk has a budget of 51.000€ that is proportionally granted by the local government and the province of West-Flanders. The budget serves to supply material means (food, hygiene products, blankets, etc.) and to pay the wages of the professional care takers that stay over at night.

In terms of *usefulness*, these night shelters aim to fulfill basic human needs by providing a safe and warm place where homeless people can spend the night. Hence, starting from 7pm, people might enter the shelter and enjoy a shower, bowl of soup and bed for the night. After having breakfast, they are asked to leave again the next morning. The main difference vis-à-vis the usefulness of both night shelters is related to the fact that in Kortrijk some form of medical assistance (e.g., foot care, bronchitis, etc.) is provided and lockers are installed where homeless people can leave their (scarce) belongings during the day. On the contrary, however, the night shelter in Hasselt is coupled to a day centre, giving homeless people an additional opportunity to spend the day in a warm and safe environment instead of having to wander around the streets.

[9] Besides the directly elected city council, there is also a Public Center for Social Welfare (PCSW) in each Belgian municipality that acts as a second public authority to ensure a right to social welfare for every citizen. Whereas the city council covers the totality of competences transferred to local authorities, the PCSW council, which is indirectly democratically legitimised as its members are appointed by the city council, has a more delineated task with regard to social policies and welfare provision at the local level. For reasons of clarity, we will consequently use the notion of 'local government' to refer to this bipolar system.

In both cases, the night shelters are separated from the regular care chain as there is no single obligation for those using the shelter to step into a care program afterwards. Equally, this has enhanced the *comprehensibility* as night shelters are expected to be more 'neutral' and non-threatening initiatives. This is especially relevant with regard to the hard-to-reach target group of homeless people who are living on the streets and often drag along a history of negative experiences with professional care takers. As such, the night shelters do provide a listening ear and are able to capture the stories of these people. Furthermore, the comprehensibility and usefulness of the night shelter in Kortrijk is further enhanced as those using the shelter are surveyed each year. However, this is not the case in Hasselt.

In terms of *availability*, it is important to notice that both night shelters are directly accessible for citizens. This implies that people do not need a referral from a professional care facility to be able to enter and they should not 'pass' an obligatory intake interview as is the case in all other residential facilities. Moreover, no one is denied access based on pre-defined criteria such as age, gender, family situation, care need (e.g., addiction, psychiatric dysfunction, etc.) or nationality. Still, based on the yearly evaluation reports of the night shelter and interviews with those network actors most directly involved, we equally noticed thresholds that might restrict the access of individual citizens to these night shelters. Firstly, both night shelters are not available all year long but are only opened for four consecutive months during winter. Secondly, the capacity of both night shelters is limited to approximately fifteen beds. Whilst this number of beds seems to cover demands for help in Hasselt, this is not particularly the case in Kortrijk. The internal evaluation reports showed that during previous winters, the night shelter lacked sufficient capacity to accommodate at least one additional person in approximately one out of four nights. As a result, a procedure was introduced whereby beds are assigned by lot when more than 15 people have entered. Thirdly, the night shelter in Kortrijk has adopted a rule stipulating that every individual citizen might only use the night shelter for five out of eight nights (5/8 rule). This implies that after having spent five nights in the night shelter, homeless people are temporarily denied access for at least three consecutive nights. This restriction, which does not exist in Hasselt, only falls away during nights in which temperatures are below the freezing point.

Finally, there is also a difference between both cases with regard to the *affordability* of the night shelter. Whereas the use of the night shelter is anonymous and free of charge in Kortrijk, homeless people in Hasselt might face a threshold to enter because they have to specify their real name and pay a contribution of approximately 7€ a night.

4.4.2 Consultation network

In both cases, the consultation network consists of public and private fieldworkers that are active in different disciplines and organisations targeting homeless people such as local government, CGWs, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, addiction care and street corner workers. In the case of Kortrijk, there is one particular actor (the Regional Crisis Center) that performs a central role in activating the case consultation and preparing and coordinating the meetings. In both cases, the prior aim is to share expertise and information by conferring on well-delineated and often persistent situations of homeless persons that appear to be too complex to be solved by any single actor alone. In the end, this should result in the collective development of a tailor-made solution to accommodate and support these persons long-term.

The main differences between both cases in terms of *availability* are the differing number of client cases that are jointly discussed and the gateway through which client cases might appear on the agenda of the respective consultation networks. In Kortrijk, network members have made a deliberate choice to limit themselves to approximately twelve concrete client cases each year. This approach is justified by the need to discuss individual cases in-depth but is also related to the fear of overburdening individual network members. In fact, the network members' endeavour is to find a concrete solution for every person whose case is discussed at the table. As a result, each organisation is expected to take up the additional responsibility to accommodate and support one or more clients with whom this facility was not necessarily familiar with yet or even have had negative experiences with in the past. Moreover, the functioning of this particular consultation network is strongly dependent upon a single private welfare organisation, the Regional Crisis Center (RCC), which acts as an emergency shelter in the region of Kortrijk.[10] This implies that the gateway to the consultation network is narrowly defined: only those people who are referred to the RCC are considered for a collective discussion. On the contrary, the consultation network in Hasselt gathers twice a month during winter. During these meetings, network members discuss approximately 15 to 20 cases, which will inevitably be discussed in a more superficial way. Still, as every individual network member can introduce 'new' client situations, the gateway to the consultation network is defined in a far broader sense than it was in the case in Kortrijk. This implies that people sleeping rough, staying in squats or making use of

[10] In 2011, the RCC was contacted 209 times by other care facilities to make a reservation for a crisis bed. During that year, the RCC helped 97 different persons. Hence, some of these persons were referred several times to this emergency shelter by one or more care facilities. Still, the consultation network was activated only 12 times to collectively discuss one of these cases.

the emergency or night shelter might all appear on the radar of the consultation network in Hasselt.

Moreover, there are equally large differences between both cases with regard to the *usefulness* for clients of these consultation networks. Firstly, it was found that the consultation network in Kortrijk not only appointed a single network member as the responsible care taker to temporarily accommodate and look after a person, it also appoints a 'buddy'. The aim is to support and empower the client from a more neutral position as well. Therefore, this buddy must be more active as a professional care taker in another facility than the one that accommodates this person. As a result, this buddy primarily operates as a go-between in the relationship between the client and the responsible care facility. Secondly, we noticed that only in the case of Kortrijk is an intake interview conducted with every single person whose case is being discussed by the consultation network. By doing so, network members aim at acquiring crucial information before a meeting about past trajectories of the client and his or her actual needs and aspirations. Furthermore, the intake interview appears to be a good instrument to 'inform' the client about what the consultation network can and cannot do. Therefore, we could expect that *comprehensibility* for the client will be enhanced as well.

Finally, in both cases we must point to substantial drawbacks for clients in terms of *affordability*. This is related to the fact that during meetings of these consultation networks, a large amount of information about the client (e.g., financial problems, psychiatric dysfunction, aggressive behaviour, etc.) is shared at the table. This might raise substantial questions about the issue of privacy. Or as several respondents phrased it: '*We need to share this information in order to* draw a full picture on a person's situation and find a tailor-made solution, *but at the same time we sometimes operate in a grey area with regard to privacy and professional secrecy as well*'.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

In this article we had a central interest in bottom-up networks between local governments and private welfare organisations from various policy fields with the aim of looking after a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach group of homeless people. Starting from a social rights' framework that steers welfare provision in Belgium, as being an exemplary case for other European welfare states, we assessed the effectiveness of these networks at the community level (*also see RQ1*) (Provan & Milward, 2001). This was understood as the contribution the network was able to make in improving the lives of those being served by granting them more equal

opportunities to live a dignified life (Roose & De Bie, 2003). We relied on a set of criteria, which allowed us to reflect upon concrete network practices without, however, having to question homeless people themselves about their situation (Roose, Mottart, Dejonckheere, van Nijnatten & De Bie, 2009). This should allow us to elaborate on some of the implications of our research (*also see RQ2*) by counterbalancing a 'network euphoria' wherein the creation of a network is, per definition, considered a 'good' thing that should inevitably lead to favourable outcomes for clients (Bardach, 1998; Frost, 2005; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007; Kenis & Provan, 2009).

With regard to our first research question, our main conclusion is that the practices vis-à-vis clients, as they were performed by the bottom-up networks under study here, are quite ambiguous ones. On the one hand, we might agree that these networks succeed in producing collaborative advantages and realising something that could have not been achieved by individual actors working alone (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Our double case study revealed that networks were, for example, able to fill in gaps in welfare provision by creating a night shelter as an additional supply with regard to those people who had no access (anymore) to regular care or the (social) housing market and had to sleep rough or in squats. Furthermore, it was shown how a case consultation could lead to more favourable outcomes for clients by overcoming fragmentation of care and by enabling homeless people to (re-) enter into a care facility in order to get their lives back on track. More importantly, the case of Kortrijk equally revealed that network effectiveness at the community level could be further enhanced by giving homeless people a voice in the development of care trajectories and in defining what quality of care means to them. From this perspective, these networks could then be considered as potentially very powerful instruments for helping to reduce social exclusion and realise more equal opportunities for citizens.

Nonetheless, we equally observed that network members deliberately created and maintained thresholds or criteria with which they restricted the access of homeless people to the night shelter, the case consultation and to their own individual care programs and facilities as well. This implies that some practices of social exclusion were perpetuated and could eventually be reinforced. As a result, there occurred a split within the homeless population in both cities as networks seem to succeed in improving conditions of life for some, while excluding others that could or would not (yet) meet the criteria and standards imposed on them. This finding could be problematised in terms of network effectiveness at the community level, especially when referring to the central position of social rights in a modern welfare regime as levers to enable vulnerable citizens to obtain more equal opportunities to live a dignified life.

Starting from our second research objective about the lessons to be drawn from our analysis of network effectiveness for policy makers and practitioners, we must primarily point to the need for raising a lasting awareness amongst these actors about the (un)intended side-effects and potential drawbacks of working together and taking into account the perspective of those being served and targeted by the network (also see Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandebroeck, 2014). In this article, we outlined, and also tested, a valuable framework based on the notion of social justice and social rights to perform such an evaluation in terms of accessibility, availability or usefulness and to incorporate a clients' perspective without necessarily having to question these vulnerable groups ourselves (Roose, Mottart, Dejonckheere, van Nijnatten & De Bie, 2009).

Secondly, we assert that both practitioners and policy makers must be conscious of the fact that network effectiveness could be assessed as a multidimensional variable at different levels of analysis (Provan & Milward, 2001; Provan & Kenis, 2007; Klijn, 2007; Cepiku, 2013). In our case, this implied that network members faced a challenge of establishing a precarious balance between investing staff and resources on behalf of the network (e.g., by providing financial means to help organise a night shelter, by reserving a scarce place within their facility or by letting a staff member support clients within other facilities as well) in order to allow the network to survive as a stable entity per se (effectiveness at the network level) and to make a substantial contribution to improving the lives of those being served (effectiveness at the community level), while also preserving sufficient levels of organisational identity, autonomy and flexibility for adequately serving their own clients and deciding on their own admission policies (effectiveness at the organisational level) (also see Verschuere & De Corte, 2014).

In our view, this tension is largely related to the complex environment in which these bottom-up networks are established. In short, these networks operate in a 'grey area' in which a growing 'rest group' of citizens is left unserved by regular welfare provision and thus face problems of social exclusion. In our case, this was also due to the lack of an overall policy framework around the topic of homelessness in Flanders and the involvement of actors from various policy fields, such as housing, welfare or psychiatry, which are subject to different legislations that are not necessarily complementary to one another. Hence, whereas this situation might leave room for a pragmatic approach to re-shape current supply of care and for collectively developing new initiatives vis-à-vis a commonly defined target population of homeless people, it might equally hamper the members' willingness to invest scarce organisational time and resources to the network and to act as self-referential actors that are primarily motivated by securing organisational self-interest within an insecure context.

Thirdly, it must be acknowledged that networks have a dynamic nature. This implies that the structural or functional characteristics of the network might need to evolve over time in order to overcome drawbacks of fragmentation of services, the absence of joint goals and a lack of trust and mutual understanding between network actors, etc. This could, for example, be linked to the need to enhance the degree of formalisation by adopting clear, or even enforceable, rules or procedures to facilitate the process of collectively looking for solutions to support or accommodate a hard-to-reach segment of the target population. Moreover, it could also be related to raising the number of actors involved in the network as the expertise or resources of actors from other policy domains might be necessary. In a similar vein, the network might need a higher degree of centralisation, which could be reflected by an evolution from a shared participant governance structure to a lead-organisation structure (Kenis & Provan, 2009). Hence, by appointing a central organisation, all actors involved could be further activated and mobilised, their mutual interaction could be facilitated and it might also help to overcome problems of goal incongruence, cultural diversity and the need to establish trust among members (Vangen & Huxham, 2013).

Finally, policy makers must be aware of the fact that the formation of networks between relevant actors might not benefit from a 'one size fits all' approach. Local governments then face the challenge of granting a substantial level of autonomy to enable these bottom-up networks to grow and evolve and to perform their role as places of experiment and innovation with regard to welfare provision to citizens (Anheier, 2009). Hence, it might be necessary to create more favourable ground to foster interaction by reducing tensions and boundaries between different policy domains as much as possible. Moreover, these networks must be recognised, not only as service delivering vehicles, but also as preferred channels for informed policy making by recognising their 'political role', capturing policy signals and incorporating them into the formulation of new social policies. After all, the introduction of social rights in Belgium initially arose from the ambition to reduce levels of social exclusion at the local level. This might imply that local government must focus more heavily on its role of coordinating the set of bottom-up networks that are active around issues of local social policies instead of being primarily involved within these networks as a provider of public welfare services.

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Chapter 5

The political role of social work: grasping the momentum of working through interorganisational networks

Abstract

It has been repeatedly argued that social work performs a mediating role between the public sphere of government and the private sphere of individuals and families in contemporary Western welfare states. Starting from a case study of bottom-up networks for welfare provision in two Belgian cities, this article argues that these networks could be a forum for debate with the aim of maintaining a complex social problem such as homelessness above the radar. Our findings revealed that the creation of these bottom-up networks initiated debates at the network level, at the level of individual welfare organizations and at the level of local policy making. Nonetheless, it equally appeared that it was difficult for these networks to alter dominant conceptualizations of homelessness.

5.1 Problem statement

From a historical perspective on the development of the post-war welfare states throughout Western Europe, the social work profession acquired a relatively autonomous position as a mediator between the public sphere and the private sphere of individuals and families (Lorenz, 2008). This 'mediating' position implies that social work carries a double mandate of both care and control, and thus has to negotiate the relationship through which private needs and wants could be transformed into issues of public concern (Jordan & Parton, 2004). As a result, social work is also intrinsically ambiguous (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000) in terms of establishing a status or identity, as it must operate in a position of tension by balancing the rights and aspirations of citizens and collective welfare (Postle, 2002; Lorenz, 2007; Roose, Roets & Bouverne-DeBie, 2012).

In this article we aim to study the way in which social work deals with, or sometimes tries to escape from, this ambiguity arising from its mediating role. We argue this is relevant against the background of claims about the gradual 'de-politicisation' of social work (Specht & Courtney, 1995; Haynes & Mickelson, 1997; Marston & McDonald, 2012) that has been associated with the rise of managerialism (Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Lorenz, 2005; Marston & McDonald, 2012). After all, it has been repeatedly stated that the adoption of beliefs and ideas rooted in a New Public Management Paradigm (NPM) has led to a more individualistic understanding of social relationships (Dominelli, 2007; Lorenz, 2008; Lee, Tyler, & Wright, 2010). Moreover, social workers were equally urged to develop a more unilateral focus on the individual treatment of citizens through an efficient use of resources, and to pre-structure outcomes instead of performing a political role by helping to realise social reforms, or define the social problems around which they were active (Hare, 2004; Lorenz, 2008; O'Brien, 2011).

Therefore, we start from the recent tendency in the field of social work practice towards joined-up working or the creation of interorganisational networks as a means to organise welfare provision to citizens (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005). Most often, these networks are considered an instrument through which a range of public and private welfare actors seek to overcome fragmentation of care, and to produce outcomes for citizens that could not have been achieved by any single agency working alone (O'Toole, 1997; Klijn, 2008; Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Moreover, these networks are

also characterised by horizontal and non-hierarchical relationships amongst different actors that share an interest in a common problem or target group (Sorenson & Torfing, 2009). As such, they could also become a platform for collective discussion and to develop alternative explanations for social problems by challenging beliefs and assumptions that are present within day-to-day practices in these different sectors. This argument gains further importance as interorganisational networks are primarily created for dealing with complex social problems, or so-called 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973). As these wicked issues cut across policy domains and service areas and generate unpredictable demands of citizens (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011), they will further confront social workers with the ambiguity of their practices.

In sum, it is argued that social work might grasp (or avoid) this opportunity or 'momentum' to deal with ambiguity by carrying out its double mandate and explore its mediating role between the public and private spheres when working through interorganisational networks. After having outlined the research method, we will further highlight important debates at three different levels of analysis. *At the level of the network as a whole*, we relate this to the need for finding agreement amongst these actors, which are active in different policy domains, and the admission policies of the services that are collectively developed to reach out to the commonly-defined target population. Next, we argue that co-operation within these networks might also pave the road for *internal organisational debates* about the criteria with which network members restrict access to the services they themselves provide to this target group. Finally, we state that the rise of these networks might also initiate debates about complex social problems, such as homelessness, *at the level of the development of local policies*.

5.2 Research method

Beginning with our main focus on the manner in which social work deals with the ambiguity arising from its mediating role between the public and private spheres, we argue that a case study could be considered as the most appropriate research methodology to analyse these questions (Yin, 2003). A case study could be seen as a strategy for doing research that involves an empirical investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real life context, and for which multiple sources of evidence are used (Robson, 2002). As a result, this article draws upon the findings of an

interpretative case study of bottom-up networks in two cities (Kortrijk & Hasselt) in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. The case study observed how a range of private and public welfare organisations co-operated to overcome compartmentalisation of service delivery to a hard-to-reach group of homeless people within their respective municipalities. For an overview of the composition of the steering groups of the networks in both cities, please refer to Appendix 1.

We argue that homelessness is a good example of a complex social problem, as the homeless are not a homogenous population -- being homeless entails multiple dimensions, such as lack of financial means, psychiatric dysfunction, substance abuse, and process of disaffiliation (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Larsen, Poortinga, & Hurdle, 2004; European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), 2009; Lee, Tyler & Wright, 2010). This multidimensional character of homelessness has eventually led to the involvement of various policy fields around this topic, such as welfare, housing, health care, and community building, which are subject to different regulations that are not necessarily complementary to one another. Furthermore, as there is no overall policy around homelessness in Flanders. The networks under study in this article have a voluntary and bottom-up character (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003) and could be considered as the most relevant instruments to look after a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach group of homeless people that is not yet able or willing to have access to regular service provision.

Primary data were obtained from multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003): Document analysis, interviews and direct observations. In practice, these stages of data collection were, however, not completely separated but were sometimes conducted simultaneously. With regard to the document analysis, we focused on policy plans about homelessness, the meeting reports of the councils of local government in Kortrijk and Hasselt, the agenda and the meeting reports of the steering committee of the networks that gathered approximately once a month, strategic notes directed to the city council, yearly evaluation reports of the concrete projects (e.g., night shelter) these networks had developed, draft memos generated by network members to prepare meetings, etc. Furthermore, we conducted a series of 25 semi-structured interviews in Kortrijk and Hasselt with representatives of local government and the private welfare organisations that could be considered as formal members of the network, and which regularly participated in network meetings or had a stake in the development of its operational projects. This allowed us to assess network participants' views on and interpretations of particular actions and events (Walsham

1995). Respondents represented different professional disciplines and sectors (e.g., primary line of care, mental health care, addiction care, street corner work, etc.), different internal positions (because the steering group and different working groups of these networks consisted of both fieldworkers and managers) and different legal natures (e.g., public servants of local government vs. employees of private welfare organisations). Finally, we were able to get to know the cases from the inside by site visits (e.g., by obtaining a tour of the night shelter or of a welfare organisation after having conducted an interview) and by regularly attending meetings of the steering committee, or by attending a meeting of a case consultation as an observer.

In order to analyse our data, we relied on a qualitative content analysis, which is considered as the appropriate research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This implies a focus on the characteristics of language as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of text data obtained from interviews, observations, document analysis, etc. with the aim of providing knowledge and understanding of the phenomena under study (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). In concrete, we opted to conduct a directed content analysis, which is generally based upon a theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Starting from our initial focus on the way through which social work deals with the ambiguity arising from its mediating role between the public and the private spheres when working through interorganisational networks, these codes were derived from a framework in which the accessibility, availability, usefulness, etc. of the welfare services for citizens was of central concern.

5.3 Research findings

Starting from the emergence of interorganisational networks to organise welfare provision to citizens, we will explore the ambiguous character of social work practices by highlighting debates that arise at the three different levels.

5.3.1 Debates at the level of the network

Night shelters are situated at the lower end of care and provide direct access to basic material services, such as a bed for the night, a decent breakfast in the morning and the ability to take a shower. They are aimed at homeless people who are unable or unwilling to enter a professional care facility, to live independently in their own

(rental) house or lacking a social network (e.g., friends, family) to rely on for bridging a difficult period (Busch-Geertsma & Fitzpatrick, 2008). Hence, people sign up in the course of the evening and are asked to leave the building again the next morning. In both cities, these shelters had a capacity of approximately 15 beds and were financed by public means, mainly provided by local authorities. The use of the night shelter is free of charge (Kortrijk) or a limited contribution of approximately 7€ a night (Hasselt). Both shelters are directly accessible for homeless people as they do not need a referral from a care facility, nor do they have to pass an obligatory intake interview. Hence, no one is denied access at the door based on criteria such as age, gender, problems (e.g., addiction, psychiatric dysfunction), nationality or legal status. Moreover, although the possession and use of drugs or alcohol is strictly prohibited inside the shelter, the rule regime is primarily based upon respect for one another and is much less stringent than in regular care.

The joint creation of this additional supply vis-à-vis a vulnerable and often hard-to-reach segment of the homeless population has led to substantial debates amongst network members in both cases under study here. In the following section, we provide several concrete examples of ongoing discussions, or sometimes point to the lack thereof, within both networks about two central topics: the criteria to regulate access to the night shelter, and the role of the shelter as a stepping stone towards (re)integration into society.

Firstly, we refer to debates within both networks about whether or not the night shelter should be made available on a permanent basis to homeless people. Generally, the night shelters in Hasselt and Kortrijk are available for approximately four months: they open their doors during November and close again sometime in March, depending on when freezing nights cease. As a result, these shelters are considered as necessary but also short-time solutions to give homeless people some rest period and to let them revitalise, especially during cold winter months. In both cases, the limited availability of the shelters is justified by referring to the risk of centres becoming a hammock for homeless people, of encouraging passivity or a state of dependency, and to weaken their incentives or drive to regain control over their own situation. These arguments are in line with the shelterisation thesis (Grunberg & Eagle, 1990) and relate to the fear of tolerating or even institutionalising homelessness in the long run (Ellickson, 1992; Jones & Pleace, 2005).

Nonetheless, we observed that several social workers have repeatedly called these assumptions into question during network meetings by pointing to the need to provide 'physical lifelines' to homeless people all year long (Bowpitt, Dwyer, Sundin & Weinstein, 2014). From this perspective, it was stated that a substantial number of the homeless population is predominately interested in receiving some basic support in order to allow them to develop their own survival strategies without, however, being expected to tackle their issues immediately, as is the case within regular care (Fitzpatrick, Johnson, & White, 2011; Maeseele, Bouverne-De Bie, & Roose, 2013). This could be illustrated by the following quote: "*It is a misconception that a night shelter is only necessitated when it's dark and cold. Even during spring or summer, there are people seeking for a place to bridge a troubling period … or to take a shower, just to feel neat again*".

In a similar vein, it was argued that a permanent night shelter should better enable the network to maintain some connection or relationship with hard-to-reach segments of the homeless population. "*Every year, we receive new people that make use of the night shelter. We learn to know them, but once the shelter closes its doors, they often disappear off our radar again*". Moreover, some also referred to the inability of the night shelter to reach out to squatters, an important target group for the network, due to the limited availability of the shelter throughout the year. This is because many squatters consider their squat as 'their' place, which gives them a slight feeling of responsibility instead of having to live up to rules imposed by others as is the case in professional welfare facilities. Moreover, many squatters fear that their place and the few belongings they have collected will quickly be taken by others when leaving the night shelter again after a couple of weeks or months.

When focusing on thresholds limiting the availability of the night shelter, we must also point to a difference between both cases under study in this article. Whereas the night shelter in Hasselt can be continuously used during those four months, the use of the night shelter in Kortrijk is limited to five nights every eight days. This implies that after having spent the maximum number of nights, shelter users are expected to find an alternative solution themselves for at least three consecutive nights. Afterwards they could use the night shelter for a new set of five nights. This so-called 5/8 rule has been established as a compromise between network members in Kortrijk to modify the original rule with which the use of the shelter was restricted to no more than five nights every 14 days. Furthermore, it was agreed to temporarily drop the rule on freezing nights.

However there now appears to be wide agreement amongst network members about the need to maintain such a general rule to regulate the use of the night shelter by individuals. As a result, we did not observe substantial debates about this criterion. Most often, this approach was justified by our respondents by making referral to the necessity to safeguard the proper survival strategies of homeless people and to maintain some degree of solidarity between them. "*They are just like little children, claiming 'their' bed … Whereas some people are grateful to have a bed at first, they rapidly find it evident to claim all sorts of things*". The decrease of solidarity amongst homeless people could be equally related to the fact that the capacity of the night shelter in Kortrijk does not always suffice as there are regularly more people presenting at the door than there are beds available. The 'competition' between homeless people using the night shelter could be illustrated by the following quote: "*Someone complained to me about a social worker denying him access to the night shelter the other day. When I asked him who told him so, he referred to an older man with grey hair telling him that all beds were taken. Still, during that week, I remember that one of our youngsters was on duty. So, it was possible … in the end, it appeared that a homeless man stood just behind the corner of the building and 'warned' everyone that the night shelter was full in order to assure his own bed*".

Secondly, the analysis of the night shelter could provide us with another set of exemplary discussions at the level of the network as a whole. We relate this to the ambition of the night shelter in both cities under study to not only temporarily accommodate a vulnerable group of citizens, but also to become a 'springboard' for homeless people and allowing them to reconnect to society. There is, however, little discussion within both networks under study about the way through which a night shelter could realise this ambition: the aim is to provide basic material services to enable homeless people to come to rest for a while before taking their own situation back in hands. This implies that homeless people are not actively approached or treated during their stay within these shelters, but instead are mainly offered a listening ear in a non-judgmental setting, especially during cold winter months (Bowpitt, Dwyer, Sundin & Weinstein, 2014). Hence, it is basically up to shelter users themselves to launch their requests for help and to show a willingness to tackle their problems and begin to improve their own situation. In both cases, this approach is justified by referring to the need for low-threshold help by clearly separating the night shelter as not being simply another arm of regular care. This separation is because large segments of the homeless population, which could be considered as potential

shelter users, might have negative experiences with professional social work due to failed participation in care programs.

Nonetheless, in both cases under study, this transfer of shelter users to enter professional care or to obtain a house of a social housing company appeared to be very complicated on many occasions. This implies that many homeless people will also (in)voluntarily linger within the night shelter. As a result, we might point to the risk of these shelters becoming a repository for those who are (temporarily) unwilling or unable to move forward, or to adhere to admission criteria of facilities that are to some or lesser extent also targeting homeless people. In this way, the creation of an additional and qualitative supply to accommodate a hard-to-reach segment of the homeless population during cold winter months might also diminish the urgency with which professional care facilities reflect upon the criteria they apply restricting access of these people to their own facility. Moreover, as network members may no longer display a willingness to find solutions for these people, there is even the danger that the night shelter serves as a legitimation for maintaining rather strict admission rules.

We observed, however, some concrete illustrations of this search for additional solutions for these vulnerable groups of people within both networks. In the case of Kortrijk, networks members have recently developed a new small-scale pilot project comprising a 'pool' of houses, rooms and studios that are made available by individual network members, which will be collectively assigned to homeless people after a thorough debate between the ensemble of partners involved in the project. It is based on the principle of Housing First, which implies that persons who are inadequately housed and have multiple needs (such as substance abuse or mental illness) will be provided with immediate tenancy instead of first expecting them to become 'housing ready', as is the case in regular service provision (Padgett, Gulcur & Tsemberis, 2006; McNaughton-Nicholls & Atherton, 2011). Moreover, once a person moves into the new accommodation, he or she is able to live independently but might also benefit on a voluntary basis from the active support provided by a multidisciplinary team of social workers (Pleace, 2011). Although the users of the night shelter are not the primary or sole target group of this Housing First project, it could be a lever for some of them to break the vicious cycle of homelessness and to have the opportunity to live independently again.

5.3.2 Debates at the internal organisational level

The case consultations in both Kortrijk and Hasselt could be considered as an additional instrument to overcome fragmentation of care at the scale of the local or municipality level by bringing together a range of actors in different sectors who all have a common stake in social problems related to homelessness. These case consultations basically provide a platform for collectively discussing complex situations of people who lack a stable housing situation, but also have insufficient material means and suffer from an addiction problem, a mental illness or a combination of both. Nevertheless, the gateway to the case consultation is defined more narrowly in the case of Kortrijk as only one actor (the Regional Crisis Centre) could bring particular cases of 'their' homeless clients to the agenda of the network. Another difference between both cases under study relates to the frequency of their meetings: whereas the number of cases to be collectively discussed via case consultations is limited in the case of Kortrijk to approximately 12 persons each year, the case consultations are organised every two weeks in the case of Hasselt. In both cases, the aim is to develop an individualised and long-term trajectory for helping these people to get their lives back on track. As a result, the network partners not only learn more about each other by exchanging information about situations of particular clients, the consultations equally urge them to scan sectoral borders. This ability has been enabled due to policies of recognition and subsidies by the supra-local government to develop a quasi-monopoly in providing services within well-delineated, and thus also fragmented, areas of welfare provision.

During these network meetings all partners could be requested to take responsibility for accommodating or supporting a particular client either previously unknown to the facility, or who has already had negative experiences with (e.g., suspension) in the past. This implies a willingness on the part of each individual member of the case consultation to critically reflect upon admission policies with which they restrict access to their respective facilities, and to (re)consider their expectations with regard to capabilities and behaviour of clients. The experiences of local government (via the Public Centre for Social Welfare) and Centres for General Welfare (CGWs), which respectively act as a public and a private provider of general welfare services to citizens, could help us to illustrate this.

The local government in Kortrijk has a number of rooms or studios at its disposal to accommodate people who have ended up in some crisis and temporarily lack a roof above their head. These people might stay for a couple of weeks and live quite

independently, while being regularly visited by a social worker to help them sort out their problems. Still, these so-called 'crisis rooms' were not assigned to homeless people who clearly suffered from a severe addiction or a psychiatric problem. This rule was implemented to hedge local government providers against the rather unpredictable behaviour of this particular group. Nonetheless, we observed that this organisational rule was gradually interpreted in a more flexible way due to engagements that were taken up as a result of case consultations. This could be related to the fact that the local government agreed to be a part of the solution when developing a trajectory for particular clients, even if they are, for example, severe alcoholics, by allowing them to make use of a crisis room for a couple of days or weeks to bridge a period before he or she could obtain a place in a more specialised care facility (e.g., addiction care).

The following quote of a manager of a CGW provides another illustration of the difficulties and considerations related to the willingness to give up some degree of organisational autonomy in deciding who should get access to a facility, and the conditions under which this might succeed. Most often, it is about installing a form of shared responsibility, inducing a commitment from other partners to provide necessary and often specialised care:

"*Many client situations are situated just in the middle of two organisations … we used to point at one another, expecting the other party to take action first … . Due to case consultations, we sit down together to decide whether a client could be primarily labelled as being homeless, or as being a psychiatric patient. If the problem is more heavily related to homelessness, we have to take up our responsibility … Still, we only provide general care, so we need an engagement of a psychiatric facility to support us on a regular basis with this client … if the psychiatric problem turns out to be too difficult to be dealt with by our staff, there must also be an opportunity to temporarily transfer the client to the specialised facility … otherwise we are just saddled with yet another complex client situation".*

In a similar vein, another manager of a CGW highlighted the need to fill in these engagements on behalf of the network over and over again through concrete practices: "*For me, the essence of working together is about realising something you could have not achieved when working alone … still, it might have repercussions for our own organisation. Each time, the question is about how far you are prepared to move on? That's a difficult one … because there is no magic formula*".

Most often, the practice of creating these exceptions to their own admission rules was related to well-delineated situations of particular persons whose case was being collectively discussed during a meeting of the case consultation. Still, we observed that these experiences could also initiate a further debate within organisations about the criteria with which they restricted access to their care programs. Hence, case consultations inevitably created precedents that led to internal discussions about the usefulness of particular rules or work routines. In some cases, this even led to the adoption of more structural adjustments of admission policies that enhanced the overall accessibility of the services provided by the organisation. A manager of a CGW phrased it in the following way:

"In my view, it is all about experiences. A couple of months ago we agreed to accommodate an autistic person due to a case consultation. We knew in advance this person would have difficulties for maintaining his position within our facility … he preferred to eat alone, but this is complicated as each of our clients is basically expected to participate in one of the living groups of approximately 20 persons we assign them to … we allowed him to come to the table 10 minutes earlier to be at his ease … it worked out for him and for the group. Hence, autistic persons should not immediately be denied access to our facility. That is basically what this case has taught us".

5.3.3 Debates at the level of local policy

One of the merits of both the bottom-up networks under study in this article relates to the fact that they succeeded in raising awareness amongst local policymakers about the magnitude and complexity of homelessness as a social problem within their respective municipalities. In both cases, we observed a very similar and rather pragmatic approach in order to put the topic of homelessness on the local agenda. This implied that in a first phase the network decided to set up concrete operational projects, such as the creation of a small-scaled night shelter, or to conduct registration within a range of care facilities to determine the number of clients whose problem was related to homelessness. As such, they were able to objectify the problem and to make homelessness more tangible when briefing the city council. According to a street corner worker, the members of the city council were 'perplexed' when they were informed about the registered number of people actually lacking a stable housing situation or facing an increased risk of becoming homeless in the near future.

Nonetheless, we did not observe further substantial debates at the level of local policymaking about the causes of and solutions for homelessness as an unacceptable social problem to be tackled by developing new policies. This implied that the networks created around the topic of homelessness were not able yet to translate private concerns of individual homeless persons facing multiple needs into issues of public debate at this level of local policymaking. According to respondents, this could be attributed to the fact that local politicians did not consider homelessness as being their core business, and equally they feared attracting homeless people from other municipalities when allowing an extension of the degree of support to these people.

The main exception was related to the creation of the night shelter as a means to provide basic material services to homeless people during cold winter months. This implied that, once the shelters were launched as a first operational project of the networks around the topic of homelessness, city councils within both municipalities rapidly agreed to provide public monies to organise the night shelter every year during winter. The night shelter even obtained a prominent place in policy documents related to welfare or housing policies to enable vulnerable citizens to fulfil basic human needs. With regard to the topic of housing policies, it appeared, however, that city councils primarily invested their resources in enhancing the capacity of the social housing market, which was considered to be beneficial for a large amount of citizens seeking affordable houses, instead of providing means for a rather limited group of homeless people with very specific needs. Furthermore, social workers also pointed to the fact that instead of opening up a debate about homelessness as an extreme situation of poverty, a night shelter was also considered by the city council as an instrument to keep homeless people calm and to reduce nuisance on the streets as much as possible (Baillergeau, 2014).

While this relatively modest involvement of local policymakers in a hard-to-reach segment of the homeless population, and the lack of sounding board at the political level, were both identified as problems by some respondents, it opened up new opportunities for others. For example, the relatively high degree of autonomy of local government enabled some welfare provision to this particular target group.

In a similar vein, several respondents raised critical reflections about the strict city policies with regard to squats, which were closed down on a large scale due to reasons of safety and the aim to reduce nuisance for the neighbourhood. Moreover, there is no overall framework about the support to be provided when squatters are

sent back on the streets. This gave rise to a very dual interpretation of squats within the municipalities. Whereas they were considered as unsafe places with sometimes awful living conditions, it was equally recognised that the presence of squats prevented that professional welfare provision and the night shelters became completely flooded with 'new' clients.

5.4 Discussion and conclusion

Starting from the claims related to the so-called 'de-politicisation' of social work, we argued that the current tendency within the field of social work practice towards joined-up working, or the creation of interorganisational networks as a means to organise welfare provision, might open up new opportunities for social work to redefine its mediating role between the public and the private sphere. Therefore, we relied on a case study of two bottom-up networks in which various organisations joined forces to work across sectoral and public-private boundaries to look after a vulnerable and hard-to-reach segment of the homeless population in two Flemish cities. We provided several illustrations of these debates, which occurred at three different levels of analysis. In essence, these discussions were about the causes of complex situations of homeless people facing multiple needs but also about the expectations on the behaviour and capabilities of these persons.

Nevertheless, these debates have inevitably confronted social work with the ambiguity of its practice as well (Parton & O'Byrne, 2000). Hence, although a night shelter or a case consultation could serve well as additional instruments to 'politicise' and to critically reflect upon the position of a vulnerable group of citizens within society, we noticed those actors that voluntarily engaged on behalf of the networks to be reluctant as well. This was, for example, related to the deliberate creation of several thresholds to limit the accessibility of the night shelter as a necessary but also short-time accommodation for homeless people. This was due to the fear of reducing the incentives to homeless people to take their situations back in hand, and implies a large focus on the individual responsibility of homeless people to no longer have to rely on the night shelter. Moreover, although we were able to highlight several examples in which professional care facilities were willing to make exceptions upon their admission policies due to case consultations, on many occasions homeless people facing multiple needs are still expected to live up to a set of criteria as a necessary condition to be admitted in such a facility. We suggest this points to the

need to not only create such ad hoc exceptions, but also to structurally embed them within their respective admission policies with the aim of further enhancing the overall accessibility of their care programs.

As a result, we argue that social work should try to embrace this ambiguity instead of limiting itself to providing a rather technical answer to social problems (Roose, Roets & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012). This suggests that social work should deal with a complex social problem such as homelessness in a reflexive manner, with the aim of becoming an agent of social change, and to be able to redress social and personal injustices (Marston & McDonald, 2012). As such, social work might challenge dominant conceptualisations of homelessness as a social problem at the level of day-to-day practices of the network or individual care facilities. Further, social work might reframe collective identities of vulnerable groups at the level of policymaking by challenging myths and stereotypes hampering the fulfilment of ideals of social solidarity and social justice, which are at the heart of social work practices. As outlined in the previous section, it appeared however that the networks and local policymakers had a rather pragmatic relationship around homelessness and it was very difficult to initiate further in-depth debates about the nature and causes of this social problem within both municipalities.

To conclude, we might point to further levers for taking into account the concerns of homeless people when collectively dealing with homelessness through interorganisational networks of service providers. These levers suggest social work must adopt an open-ended approach when deciding to collectively tackle 'wicked' social problems through interorganisational networks. Moreover, social workers must remain sensitive to the complexity of their work and find a way to capture the concerns arising from the lifeworld of those being served and targeted, and deal with them through dialogue and reciprocal learning processes (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; Roets, Dean, & Bouverne-De Bie, in press).

This could be illustrated by the modification of the opening hours of the night shelter in Kortrijk, and the procedure to assign the beds in the case of full occupancy. The walk-in time of the night shelter, originally determined by network members between 7.30pm and 9pm, was shortened to no longer than half an hour. This was because shelter users indicated during informal talks with volunteers and staff of the night shelters (e.g., when playing a round game at night or doing the dishes) that the former approach caused too much stress. This was especially the case with regard to the

uncertainty of being able to obtain a bed during busy periods and the need to provide a last-minute alternative after 9pm otherwise. Moreover, at the request of shelter users themselves, beds were assigned by a system of lottery draw during nights when more than 15 people entered the shelter and asked for a bed. According to shelter users, this system was perceived as being more 'neutral' and 'honest' by shelter users than other approaches.

Secondly, the needs of homeless people could be better reflected by strengthening the role of street corner workers and voluntary organisations that are active around homeless people (e.g. by providing meaningful daytime activities) as vision keepers within the network. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that professional care facilities voluntarily engaging on behalf of a network around the topic of homelessness are soon forced to act as firefighters dealing with a growing number of acute and often very complex situations of homeless clients. On the other hand, this could be attributed to their position close to the lifeworld of clients and the fact that they are more likely to be able to unravel the actual impact of a measure targeting this vulnerable segment of the population. As a social worker of a professional facility put it: "*In a sense, they are irreplaceable as the eyes and ears of the network*". Nonetheless, street corner workers and those who are active within such a voluntary organisation indicated having faced many difficulties being taken seriously as a full member of the network, because they feel of being perceived as 'oddballs' in comparison with professional care facilities (La Cour & Hojlund, 2008; Villadsen, 2009).

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Chapter 6

Uncovering the double-edged sword of inter-organizational networks of welfare services: tackling wicked issues in social work

Abstract

Starting from the tendency within the field of social work practice to create interorganizational networks for welfare provision, this article highlighted the opportunities that arise for social work to perform its mediating role between the public and private spheres and for tackling social exclusion. This could be realized by overcoming fragmentation of care at the micro-level of welfare provision to citizens but also to use these networks as a forum for debate to challenge dominant conceptualizations of complex social problems. Nevertheless, the article also pointed to the danger of a so-called 'network euphoria' and outlined some of the risks associated with working together through networks. Therefore, the central argument of the article relates to the need for developing a common framework or value base for those involved in these networks with reference to human rights and principles of social justice.

6.1 Introduction

During the last decades, governments in many European welfare states have struggled with a range of new social and economic risks (Beck, 1992; Williams, 1999; Biesta, 2011; Saenz de Ugarte & Martin-Aranaga, 2011; Adams, 2012). As a growing number of citizens appeared to have ended up in a stubborn situation of dependency upon the welfare system, European post-War welfare states were increasingly criticized yet also dismantled through the adoption of politics of neoliberalism (Giddens, 1994; Lorenz, 2005; Ascoli, 2006). In a similar vein, Western societies equally embraced the philosophy of the Third Way, which gave rise to the creation of activating welfare states to ensure that welfare recipients did not become dependent on services but were able to make the most of their abilities and resources (Giddens, 1998). Although the notion of the Third Way has been used in various senses (Barrientos & Powell, 2004), it has been observed that some common ambitions of these welfare state regimes can be identified: becoming a springboard for citizens by redistributing opportunities instead of just redistributing resources in times of crises, seeing paid work as the most sustainable way out of poverty, and empowering marginalized groups by increasing their participation in society (Commission on Social Justice, 1994; Giddens, 1998; Ferguson, 2004; Marthinsen & Skjefstad, 2011).

Nonetheless, it has been equally argued that specific welfare recipients have become more vulnerable in the context of the activating welfare state, as they might lack the proper resources to become productive citizens within the scope of self-responsibility and self-governance (Clarke, 2005; Kessl, 2009; Welbourne, 2011). In order to realize the well-being of these vulnerable and often hard-to-reach groups of citizens that no longer benefit from the welfare system, an ambitious pursuit of inter-organizational collaboration, or so-called joined-up working, is recently stressed in the field of social work (Allen, 2003; Marcussen & Torfing, 2003; Frost, 2005; Klijn, 2008; Garrett, 2008; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, Vandenbroeck, 2014). Over the last decades, many efforts have been done to develop inter-organisational 'networks' of welfare services (Provan & Kenis, 2008), which emerged due to the increasingly multidimensional character of social problems in which these welfare services might intervene. In essence, these problems are often labeled as 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973), that cut across a diversity of service areas and policy domains which implies that these issues are too complex to be dealt with by single welfare actors (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson & Bennett, 2011).

In the context of these developments, however, substantial questions can be raised about the meaning of these networks that operate across organizational, sectoral and

public-private boundaries in the current era of the activating welfare state (Bardach, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007; Kenis & Provan, 2009). In this article, we address more in particular pertinent challenges in the implementation of these inter-organisational networks for the role of social work in the realization of the well-being of welfare recipients. We argue that working through networks in the provision of welfare services might be considered as a double-edged sword: whereas the formation of inter-organisational networks might offer renewed opportunities for social work as applied social policy makers while combining a micro-perspective on social problems with a macro-level perspective there is also a risk of developing a rather technical and controlling approach when welfare actors deal with complex situations of welfare recipients in these networks. The latter implies a narrowed focus on individual shortcomings of welfare recipients while neglecting more structural causes of social problems. As such, we argue that the tendency to create inter-organizational networks can also imply, or reinforce, a de-politicization of social work (Haynes & Mickelson, 1997; Allen, 2003; Stanisforth, Fouché, O'Brien, 2011; Marston & McDonald, 2012; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014). In order to tackle these challenges, we highlight the need for social work involved in the formation of inter-organisational networks to develop a common framework or value base for network interactions with reference to principles of human rights and social justice, which are articulated in the international definition of social work and can enable the incorporation of the perspective and lifeworld of those being served (Ife, 2001; Hare, 2004; Sewpaul & Jones, 2005).

6.2 The rise of networks: dealing with wicked issues

In what follows, we trace the origins of the claimed new opportunities offered by the formation of inter-organisational networks in Public Administration scholarship, where a shift 'from government to governance' emerged as a new paradigm (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1998). This paradigm shift basically refers to the fact that the boundaries between the public and the private sector increasingly blurred, which allows private welfare organizations to gain a stake in the public policy process (Pierre, 2000). Second, we outline network dimensions and characteristics in the field of social work scholarship, according to which this inter-organizational networking between private and public welfare services is turned into an instrument to overcome the historical fragmentation of welfare services. Furthermore, we highlight the ongoing debates about the need to evaluate network outcomes, and the ways in which this task should be performed in order to counterbalance a tendency towards 'network euphoria' (Kenis & Provan, 2009:440). Finally, we discuss the potential

surplus value of inter-organisational networking, and the necessary requirements for social work to realize this surplus value. We argue that organisations who engage in inter-organisational networking should develop and construe a platform for social work, at the micro-level of individual service delivery, yet equally well at the macro-level of social policy in order to enhance public debate about the definition of social problems

6.2.1 A paradigm shift from government to governance

In general terms, the emergence of inter-organizational networks is at the heart of the so-called shift 'from government to governance' (Stoker, 1998), which emerged as a new paradigm in public administration scholarship to describe more horizontally-oriented relations between government provided by the welfare state and governance provided by a wide range of private actors. In that vein, 'governance' has rapidly become a new buzzword and a catch-all term. As Frederickson (2005:284) argues, *'governance is everywhere and appears to mean anything and everything*'. Therefore, governance can be considered as a new process by which society is governed (Rhodes, 1997). The latter relates to a decline of the legitimate power and authority of the public sector to make decisions, since ideas about governing society through laws and detailed regulation are replaced by a trend to involve a variety of autonomous public as well as private actors in the public policy process (Pierre, 2000; Sorenson & Torfing, 2009; Koliba, Meek, & Zia, 2011). Hence, this process of governance refers to the development of governing styles in which the boundaries between the public and the private sector have been increasingly blurred (Stoker, 1998). Governance also relates to an attempt to improve the coordination between this diversity of relatively autonomous actors while using horizontal mechanisms that do not rely on the authority and sanctions of government (Rhodes, 1997; Peters & Pierre, 1998). As a result, governance is extremely conjoined with the notion of inter-organisational networks of welfare services (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003), and is perceived as the process that takes place within these networks (Klijn, 2008). The rise of inter-organisational networks can be linked to the increasingly complex and multidimensional character of social problems, or so-called 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973) with which vulnerable groups of citizens are confronted within contemporary societies. These wicked issues are considered as highly problematic situations that cannot be dealt with by single welfare actors, and thus require a broad systematic response across organizational, sectoral and public-private boundaries (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson & Bennett, 2011). From this perspective, the idea of inter-organisational networks has been considered as a flexible alternative for rather hierarchical steering mechanisms of government (Powell, 1990; O'Toole, 1997).

6.2.2 Inter-organisational network dimensions and characteristics

As outlined above, the importance of organisational reform in the field of social work is stressed in a diversity of European countries, which is rhetorically rooted in 'joined-up thinking' (Frost, 2005). The idea of 'joined-up thinking' is perceived as a systemic move that points to 'the historical lack of communication and coordination between welfare institutions within the differentiated structure of the welfare system' (Allen, 2003:289). In that vein, efforts have been made to overcome this fragmentation of publicly funded welfare services by the development of inter-organisational networks of social services, often at a local level (Provan & Kennis, 2008). In these inter-organisational networks, private welfare organizations and the public sector attempt to collaborate with the objective of (re)organizing social welfare provision for citizens within the context of the contemporary welfare state (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014).

Rather than considering this networking with reference to all kinds of collaboration (Borzel, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007), we define them as 'structures of interdependence involving multiple organizations or parts thereof, where one unit is not merely the formal subordinate of others in some larger hierarchical arrangement' (O'Toole, 1997:45). Therefore, we build upon the definition of 'governance networks' as it was provided by Sorenson and Torfing (2005):

> "*a relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent but operationally autonomous public and private actors, who interact through negotiations that involve bargaining and deliberation, which takes place within a relatively institutionalized framework of contingently articulated norms, rules and values and that is self-regulating within the limits set by external agencies and that contributes to the production of public purpose in the broad sense of visions, ideas, plans and regulations*" (Sorenson &Torfing, 2005:197).

With regard to the promise of governance networks in welfare provision that inter-organisational networking provides a solid and progressive solution to deal with wicked issues, this definition might allow us to unravel the different dimensions and characteristics of inter-organisational networks consisting of multiple public and private actors, which are often active in different policy fields. With reference to horizontal relations and processes of bargaining and negotiation, these networks can be characterized by a negotiated rationality, which implies that decisions are shaped and re-shaped through continued interactions between autonomously functioning organizations that bring their expertise to the table (Scharpf, 1997). Networks can be

seen as goal-oriented structures, which implies that organisations aim to realize both their organizational objectives as well as commonly defined goals (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007). It is argued that, as a result, flows of information between these parties can be enhanced and exchanged (Allen, 2003).

6.2.3 Countering the network euphoria

Nevertheless, the implementation of inter-organisational networking has also thrown the new public management (NPM) paradigm open to challenge (Klijn 2007), which is countering a so-called current 'network euphoria' (Kenis & Provan, 2009: 440). Whereas NPM is about the efficient use of scarce resources (Kapucu 2006), the coordination of welfare provision through market-based principles, however, has its limitations, just as it was the case for the traditional hierarchical steering mechanisms (Powell 1990; Isset, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011). Therefore, we consider it as highly relevant to discuss the possible complexities and limitations of the implementation of inter-organisational networks of welfare organisations.

Despite the promised advantages of inter-organisational networking as they were outlined above, the topic of network *effectiveness* has been too often neglected (Bardach, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007). Inter-organisational networking, or joined-up working, has however been framed as a progressive solution that 'results in a more effective and thus less fallible welfare system' (Frost, 2005: 19). It is argued, however, that inter-organisational networks can be considered as 'hybrid' structures because networks generally consist of a plurality of actors from different spheres that are all driven by a proper logic (Koliba, Meek & Zia, 2011; Bozzini & Enjolras, 2012). As such, opposing views might exist about network *effectiveness.* In our view, the implementation of 'joined-up work' as a way to improve the effectiveness of social service delivery doesn't necessarily imply 'good' or 'high quality' work (see also Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014).

In our view, there is a danger in developing rational-technical approaches to social problems in these networks in order to make social work more effective in dealing with risks and uncertainties (Hood, 1991; Ferlie, 1996; Healy, 2002; Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Lorenz, 2005; Kapucu, 2006; Otto, Polutta & Ziegler, 2009; Saenz de Ugarte & Martin-Aranaga, 2011). This has been mainly associated with an increased focus at the micro-level of individual service delivery on managerial-driven performance systems, in order to create a rationally and efficiently integrated supply of services which can result in a de-personalized approach that emphasizes the functional management of cases (Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, Vandenbroeck, 2014). The focus on pre-structured and measurable outcomes might diminish the ability or willingness to deal with

demands for help that are sometimes highly complex and rather unpredictable (Hood, 2014). Moreover, these networks might operate as a sort of almighty gatekeepers through which the access of citizens to welfare provisions is regulated and sometimes hampered (Maeseele, 2012). It might be argued that organizing welfare provision for vulnerable groups of citizens should not only be guided or steered by the desire to realise more effective welfare services, but should also embrace the specificity of interests, aspirations and concerns of welfare recipients (Dean & Melrose, 1996). Based on research about inter-organisational networks and their attempt to deal with the 'wicked issue' of homelessness, for example, research shows that homeless people are expected to express their willingness and motivation to (learn to) behave as (self-)responsible citizens as a condition to make use of all the welfare services involved in these inter-organisational networks(Maeseele et al., 2014a, b). Here, the needs of welfare recipients are easily interpreted without questioning their life world in an attempt to resonate with their agency and meaning making (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009). According to Allen (2003), these highly integrated networks can even operate as holistic powers that 'see everything', 'know everything' and 'do everything', and therefore discipline and control every aspect of welfare recipients' lives. Ass these holistic powers tend to be considered as infallible, there is a risk of blaming individual welfare recipients who refuse to subject themselves to the social obligations and requirements of welfare services for the failings of the system, that is supposedly designed to help them (see Frost, 2005; Dwyer, Bowpitt, Sundeen & Weinstein, 2015). Some researchers have even argued that the shift towards an increased co-ordination and networking of welfare services may be both politically and theoretically undesirable, arguing that 'such a shift is not to be supported as it increases the surveillance and control' over individual welfare recipients' lives (Frost, 2005:19).

6.2.4 Exploring the opportunities of inter-organisational networks

In previous research, we identified another approach to network effectiveness, that is underpinned by the idea that social services involved in inter-organisational networking attempt to embrace the ways in which welfare recipients experience social work as supportive (Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, Vandenbroeck, 2014). Here, the quality of social service delivery can be encompassed in dialogue with welfare recipients, while working responsively with their contextualized situations (McBeath & Webb, 2002; Roose, 2008). As such, these networks might also be expected to have a certain capacity for dealing with the complexity and unpredictable character of the life world and concerns of welfare recipients in contemporary society. When

considering the opportunities of inter-organisational networks for dealing with social problems at this *micro-level* of individual service delivery to citizens, we might refer to the claims that have been made concerning the historical lack of communication between welfare institutions within the highly differentiated structure of the welfare system (Allen, 2003; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010). From this perspective, networks could be seen as a flexible means to overcome fragmentation and specialization of welfare services (Frost, 2005; Hood, 2014; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014). This has been associated with the concept of 'collaborative advantage' (Huxham, 2003), with reference to the creation of synergies by avoiding overlap, filling in service gaps, making effectively use of scarce resources and unlocking the benefits of comparative advantage (Vangen & Huxham, 1996). Starting from the reference that is made in the definition of inter-organisational networking as offered by Sorensen and Torfing (2005) to the *relatively institutionalized framework of contingently articulated norms, rules and values* in which interactions through networks take place, we argue that these networks should make an important contribution at the *macro-level* in the formulation and development of (new) social policies vis-à-vis a particular target group or a concrete policy problem. This relates to the longstanding debate within the field of social work about the involvement of social work organizations in realizing social change and their commitment to policy practice and advocacy activities (Kramer, 1981; Haynes, 1998; Marston & McDonald, 2012). As Marston and McDonald (2012) assert, while making an analysis of situations and social problems, the role of the social worker in the political sphere is about a political engagement towards social justice. In the following section, we discuss this challenge for social work being involved in inter-organisational networks of welfare services, and argue that therefore we need a common, rights-based framework.

6.3 Towards a common, rights-based framework for guiding network interactions

In the previous section, we outlined both the risks and opportunities of inter-organisational networks, and therefore addressed the necessity to identify the conditions under which the benefits of inter-organisational networking can emerge in social work practices. In our view, this search reveals an important question about the value base or the frame of reference that guides network actors when they collaborate across organizational, sectorial and public-private boundaries in the realization of the welfare rights of vulnerable and hard-to-reach welfare recipients.

Therefore, the starting point to address a valuable common frame of reference might be the international definition of social work, as it is recently formulated on the website of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2014):

> *"Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing".*

With reference to principles of human rights, which are seen as those rights that are inherent to people's nature and without which it is not possible to survive as human beings (Hare, 2004), social work that aims to establishing a socially just society should incorporate a commitment to social, cultural and economic rights instead of just safeguarding political and civil rights (Ife, 2001). These social rights can, however, be interpreted in various ways (Dean, 2013), and a conceptual distinction can be made between a contractarian and a solidaristic approach of these rights (Roets, Dean & Bouverne-De Bie, in press).

Within a *contractarian* approach, rights have a formal character and are perceived as freedom rights or choice rights (Dean, 2014). The underlying theoretical assumptions imply that welfare rights are translated as social obligations, since the ideal citizen is the one that makes deliberate choices and displays a sufficient degree of self-responsibility (Clarke, 2005; McNay, 2009). This ideology of individual choice and opportunity implies residual social work practices, expecting that so-called responsible citizens become independent and no longer need social work (Clarke, 2005). From this perspective, professionals promote and empower people and communities to solve and cure their own problems (Mol, 2006; Lorenz, 2013). This approach to welfare rights is particularly relevant in the context of the activating welfare state, which aims to empower citizens by making an appeal upon their own responsibilities and resources (Clarke, 2005) and might pave the road for an increased focus on social obligations and individual responsibility of welfare recipients who are expected to live up to expectations that are imposed on them as conditions for benefiting from welfare services (Kessl, 2009; Welbourne, 2011). As our analysis shows, this approach to welfare rights can be deeply problematic as it might lead to an inter-organisational networking of welfare services being both politically and theoretically undesirable as it increases the surveillance and control over individual welfare recipients' lives (Frost, 2005).

In that vein, it might be necessary to pursue inter-organisational networking from an interpretation of welfare rights as solidaristic. From a *solidaristic* perspective, rights are more substantive and are conceived as entitlement rights or benefit rights (Dean, 2014), which are thought of in an optimal sense as that what is required not only to survive, but in order to flourish as fully fledged human beings (Dean 2014). In practice, welfare rights may be construed through negotiation in social relationships. As such, a thick understanding of welfare rights also embraces the social context that sustains our human dignity, or our need to flourish (Dean, 2010). A solidaristic understanding of rights is therefore in line with an inclusive understanding of the welfare dependency of citizens (Fraser & Gordon, 1994), grounded in the relational conditions of everyday life, and rooted in social relationships which are bound by mutual interdependence rather than promoting a dependency/independency dichotomy, as we need to accept that we are *all* necessarily dependent on others (Williams, 1999; Raes, 2003). This refers to a notion of unconditional welfare rights, which implies that every citizen in our society has the right to human flourishing (Dean, 2010), experiencing a sense of belonging as a member of society (Lister, 2007).

Hence, starting from the aim of installing a shared responsibility vis-à-vis a commonly agreed target group or social problem, a momentum might occur for welfare organisations who are involved in inter-organisational networking in dealing collectively with social problems by pulling down organizational and sectorial barriers. Their interpretations of welfare rights, in a solidaristic sense, may be contradictory but this might give a solid underpinning for discussing and defining these social problems and translating them into political claims vis-à-vis policy makers. Moreover, new interpretations could be collectively developed while being the subject of productive debate (Powell, 1990). Welfare rights might then be constituted through revealing a plurality and diversity of concerns (Biesta, 2011; Roets, Dean & Bouverne-De Bie, 2014). This can be done through an open-ended and dialogical process of negotiation and learning in which the targeted individual, social workers and other professionals are involved and could speak out for themselves (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009). As a result, the actual meaning and impact of social work cannot be predefined but must be realized over and over again in everyday practices, including the ones arising from working through interorganizational networks. This is mainly because every answer to social problems will remain incomplete as it inevitably opens up new opportunities, questions and limitations. As such, we argue that social work must attempt to embrace ambiguity as a core element of the social work's profession by remaining sensitive to this complexity and by engaging with broader public debates on these social problems (Roose, Roets & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012). In sum, we believe that inter-organisational networks, due to their negotiated rationality and horizontal

relations, could function as forums for a collective debate about how to define social problems and to establish a commonly agreed vision only if welfare rights are considered from a solidaristic point of view. Moreover, networks might also create a platform to implement this shared vision and to raise strong collective claims with the aim of realizing social change in government policies by functioning as watchdogs on behalf of the vulnerable groups they represent (Verschuere & De Corte, 2015).

6.4 Discussion and conclusion

This article focused on the emergence of inter-organisational networks in the field of social work practice, which has been often associated with the increasingly wicked character of social problems in contemporary societies. This task of developing inter-organisational networks of welfare services is, however, complicated as network effectiveness could be considered as a multidimensional variable that could be assessed at different levels of analysis, and from different perspectives (Klijn, 2007). Although network effectiveness could be evaluated at the organizational level (e.g. in terms of the benefits to be expected for each individual network member) or at the network level (e.g. in terms of stability of the network, the strength of ties between network members, etc.), we argue that particular attention should also be paid to an evaluation of network outcomes at the community level. The latter is then understood as the contribution the network is able to make in improving the conditions of life of those being served or targeted by the network (Provan & Milward, 2001). We have also argued that there is a risk in developing rational-technical approaches to social problems via these networks in order to make social work more effective in dealing with risks and uncertainties (Hood, 1991; Ferlie, 1996; Healy, 2002; Tsui & Cheung, 2004; Lorenz, 2005; Kapucu, 2006; Otto, Polutta & Ziegler, Saenz de Ugarte & Martin-Aranaga, 2011). It was argued that new opportunities might arise for social workers who are involved in these collaborative structures from a responsive approach, since these networks have the ability to create a forum for debate which allows these actors to overcome fragmentation of care at the micro-level of individual service delivery but also to help to define complex social problems at the macro-level. As a result, we pointed to the need for establishing responsive approaches to social problems, underpinned by a solid, rights-based frame of reference or value base to steer interactions between the parties that are involved in these networks. We have argued that this could be realized through the development by network members of a common framework based on the principles of human rights and social justice to ensure that the perspective of those being served or targeted by the network is fully taken into account.

In that sense, we have argued that the international definition of social work might be a good starting point, referring to the need to combine a human rights' approach with a strive to realize social justice, and that a solidaristic understanding of welfare rights rather than a contractarian understanding of welfare rights might be very productive. This is especially relevant as we started this article by making referral to the growing emphasis put by governments on principles of activation and empowerment of citizens as a solution with regard to failures of the traditional welfare state. Nonetheless, as the concept of the activating welfare state has been criticized as a justification for the retrenchment of the state in addressing social inequality (Leggett, 2004; Kessl, 2009; Sirotkina & Van Ewijk, 2010; Welbourne, 2011), these interorganizational networks do have the potential to become necessary platforms for social work to initiate public debates, to confront differing opinions about living and living together, and to challenge assumptions about welfare recipients' social obligations to adapt to predefined norms, such as the obligation to obtain waged work although they might lack the skills and competencies to do so (Jordan, 2001; Villadsen, 2007). This implies the recognition of a wide variety of concerns that could be contradictory but can be unraveled through dialogue and reciprocal learning processes between social workers and those who are served or targeted. Moreover, it might allow that the lifeworld and concerns of vulnerable and often marginalized groups of citizens are really taken into account, which could further enable them to become recognized as full members of society.

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Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.1 A brief recapitulation of the problem statement

Beginning with the observed levels of social exclusion, which could be observed within many contemporary Western societies (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Williams, 1999; Biesta, 2011), this doctoral dissertation had a central interest in the emergence of bottom-up networks as a means for (re-) organising welfare provision to vulnerable groups of citizens at the local level in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. In essence, we attributed the fact that citizens faced a risk of falling between the cracks of welfare provision to the perpetuation of the historically-grown fragmentation of care (Allen & Sprigings, 2001; Sannen, 2003; Piessens & Lauwers, 2008), but likewise to the evolving ambitions of many post-war welfare states with regard to capacities and expected behaviours of individual welfare recipients (Clarke, 2005; Kessl, 2009).

Therefore, we advanced the argument that these bottom-up networks, which float on the auxiliary and voluntary engagements of worried field workers (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003), could be a meaningful lever for social work to perform its mediating role by turning private needs and problems into issues of public concern. The latter implies that networks, which are characterised by horizontal relationships and a negotiated rationality amongst various interdependent but operationally autonomous actors (Powell, 1990; Scharpf, 1997, O'Toole, 1997; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009) do not only grant social work the opportunity to tackle social exclusion at the micro-level of individual service delivery, but might also facilitate its political role by challenging dominant conceptualisations of social problems at the macro-level through these collective discussions.

In order to deal with this problem statement, which was more extensively outlined in the introduction section, this doctoral dissertation builds upon two main research questions that are of central concern within the field of social work practice. As we approach this study from an interdisciplinary perspective, we therefore rely on a set of well-established concepts and theories that have been developed within the field of public administration about the nature of the relationship between the public sector and private welfare organisations with regard to social service delivery to citizens.

Therefore, this concluding chapter is built up in the following way. Whereas the first part recapitulates the question about the breeding ground for these bottom-up networks to occur within the institutional of the welfare state in Belgium (also see

RQ1), the second part will elaborate on the actual outcomes that are produced via such networks for citizens and for a vulnerable group of homeless people facing complex needs in particular (also see RQ2). These key findings will then allow us in a third section to reconsider the abovementioned problem statement about how social work performs its mediating role between the public sphere of government and the private sphere of individuals through these networks. In the next part, we will highlight the importance of a frame of reference or value base for guiding network interactions. Moreover, starting from the debate on the structural, functional and contextual determinants of network effectiveness (Provan & Milward, 1995; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini & Nasi, 2009; Mandell, Keast, & Agranoff, 2013), we will outline three possible levers for helping to ensure that the potential of working through bottom-up networks becomes more fully exploited. Finally, we will revert to the interdisciplinary character of the present doctoral dissertation, and briefly summarise some key findings that might help us to shed a new light on important concepts and debates on the functioning and outcomes of networks.

7.2 About the breeding ground for bottom-up networks to emerge (RQ1)

This first research question was approached via a quantitative dataset, which was derived from a large-N survey of 255 managers of private welfare organisations that were respectively active in four welfare-related policy domains in the 13 largest cities or regional capitals of Flanders. Respondents were questioned about the service delivering and expressive roles of their organisations within the welfare state, the different dimensions of their one-to-one relationship with governments at the federal, regional and local level, and about the impact of these relationships with the public sector on their internal functioning (Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Anheier, 2005; Verschuere, 2014).

Within the *first article* (De Corte & Verschuere, 2014b) we referred to an existing public administration typology (Kuhnle & Selle, 1990) through which the relationship of private welfare organisations with local government could be analysed via two particular dimensions: the financial ties and accountability requirements that are associated with these public funds on the one hand, and the degree of integration in terms of direct communication with policy makers, such as politicians or administrations, on the other. Whereas the former could be associated with the service-delivering role of private welfare organisations within the welfare state, the

latter is more closely related to an expressive role by raising their voice and defend the interest of the clients they aim to represent.

The article showed that, despite the relatively modest financial and regulative ties between private welfare organisations and local governments within the context of the third-party government regime in Belgium, more than half of the managers of these private welfare actors within our sample indicated of being relatively well-integrated at the local governmental level. Besides, only one out of five managers stated that their organisation completely lacked these direct formal or informal contacts with relevant policy makers at the local level.

Within the *second article* (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014) we relied on a framework that was derived from resource dependence theory (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Therefore, we conducted a series of ANOVA-tests to analyse whether the relatively strong financial ties of these private welfare organisations with the central government, and the accountability pressure attached to these funds, had a negative impact on their perception of autonomy in making key organisational decisions. As we found support for the initial resource dependence framework, we must then point to the hampering effect of the institutional context in which these private welfare organisations must operate. This implies a danger of becoming simply another arm of government and to have less organisational autonomy and flexibility to perform tasks outside the context of their close relationship with the regional Flemish government as being their main funding source (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Boyle & Butler, 2003; Jung & Moon, 2007). As a result, there might be less space and flexibility to invest scarce resources to participate to bottom-up networks for working across organisational and sectoral boundaries with the aim of responding to the multidimensional and unpredictable character of the demands and needs of citizens that are not able (anymore) to benefit from regular welfare provision.

Nevertheless, we equally highlighted several factors that could help us to shed a more nuanced light upon this finding about the hampering impact of the institutional context on the autonomy of private welfare organisations. This could, for example, be related to the type of strategic decision under study. Whereas the impact of public funding and accountability pressure seemed to be higher with regard to decisions concerning the target groups to be served, and the outcomes to be achieved when working around these groups, the managers reported much less governmental interference with regard to their 'internal' functioning, such as defining the mission and goals of the organisation and determining the concrete procedures through which clients must be helped. Furthermore, it also appeared that a relatively high degree of managers of these private welfare actors perceived these strategic organisational

decisions to be the result of deliberative consultation between themselves and governments as equal partners.

Hence, despite the relatively weak position of local governments vis-à-vis private welfare organisations within the third-party government regime in Belgium, and the undeniable accountability pressure to which these private welfare actors must adhere, these first two articles might allow us to substantiate the claims about the increasing dynamics and forms of interorganisational collaborations at the local level in Flanders (see for example, De Rynck, 2013; Raeymaekers, 2013).

This is a relevant finding as these bottom-up networks must also be considered as a means to identify designate and overcome possible shortfalls of the welfare state with regard to welfare provision to citizens. Moreover, we argue that these local dynamics will especially occur with regard to so-called 'wicked' issues (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that cut across policy domains and service areas and are too complex to be dealt with by any single welfare actor working alone (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011). Nonetheless, this large-N study does not allow us to gauge insight about determining factors other than those related to the institutional context for helping us to understand the rise of these bottom-up networks. Hence, in order to better understand drawbacks and pitfalls that are related to the internal decisions of these public and private welfare actors to invest scarce organisational resources on behalf of these networks, we must equally rely on data that are gathered through case studies of such networks as well. This will be repeatedly highlighted throughout the next paragraphs of this discussion section.

7.3 About the outcomes for citizens of bottom-up networks (RQ2)

With regard to our second research question about the meaning for citizens of the welfare services that are collectively produced, we relied on an interpretative case study of bottom-up networks, which arose in two separate Flemish cities to deal with a group of people who are homeless or are confronted with an unstable housing situation. This could be attributed to the fact that these people do also encounter, to some or lesser extent, problems related to insufficient material resources, mental health issues, addiction problems and similar issues, which often makes it difficult to obtain or maintain their position at the (social) housing market, or within a welfare facility at the primary or secondary line of care. Moreover, the emergence of bottom-up networks in both Kortrijk and Hasselt could be considered as a concretisation of

the repeatedly expressed need for enhanced intersectoral cooperation around the particular topic of homelessness in Flanders (see for example, Van Regenmortel, Demeyer, Vandenbempt & Van Damme, 2006; Termote & De Mol, 2010).

Therefore, this doctoral dissertation has a particular interest in evaluating the outcomes of these networks at the community level. This is then understood as the contribution these collaborative endeavours are able to make in improving the conditions of life of those being served and targeted (Provan & Milward, 2001). Moreover, starting from the research context in Belgium, we referred to the introduction of a right to social welfare, which allowed us to distil a set of criteria to perform this evaluation (Roose & Bouverne-De Bie, 2003; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007). As such, quality of care for citizens was operationalised in terms of the availability, the accessibility, the usefulness, the comprehensibility and the affordability of welfare provision. We did not only consider these networks to be instruments to overcome fragmentation of care and to reduce or remove thresholds at the micro-level of individual service delivery (article 3), but also as a means to continue conducting debates about social problems and the position of vulnerable groups of people, such as homeless people, within society (article 4).

The *third article* (De Corte, Verschuere & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015a) showed that the bottom-up networks under study were able to overcome several thresholds at the supply-side of welfare provision. As such, these networks were able to realise a collaborative advantage (Vangen & Huxham, 2013) that could have not been realised by any of the single actors working alone, and without which these vulnerable groups of people would be definitely have been worse off within both municipalities as they had fallen through the cracks of the welfare state.

This was, for example, reflected in a commitment to fill in service gaps by investing time and resources in the creation of an additional night shelter to prevent people needing to sleep rough involuntarily, and to take measures for gradually augmenting the usefulness of the night shelter for those staying overnight. Moreover, we observed a willingness of the network members to overcome fragmentation of care by regularly conducting collective discussions via case consultations about particular situations of homeless people, with the aim of developing a long-term trajectory for people who were not able (any longer) to have access to residential welfare facilities. As such, these bottom-up networks provided enhanced opportunities for producing a tailor-made solution for particular homeless people, and thus to improve the quality of care, not only in terms of availability but also in terms of its usefulness and comprehensibility.

The *fourth article* (De Corte, Verschuere & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015b) elaborated on the ability of these bottom-up networks to become a forum for debate with the aim of maintaining homelessness above the radar as being a complex societal problem. Therefore, we highlighted several concrete examples of these debates, which occurred at different levels. At the organisational level of individual network organisations, we pointed to a reflexive process through which several organisations agreed to explore exceptions upon their internal admission criteria for homeless people through their engagements on behalf of these case consultations. Next, we equally observed important debates at the level of social policy-making as the topic of homelessness finally appeared on the agenda of local politicians and the city council due to the pragmatic and operational efforts of these bottom-up networks to objectify and substantiate the claims about the urgency and complexity of problems related to homelessness (also see Viaene, 2013).

Nevertheless, we might also state that network effectiveness at the community level was undermined in a two-fold way. First, we must point to the fact that the concept of network effectiveness can only be fully understood as a multidimensional variable as there are different relevant levels of analysis to perform this evaluation (Provan & Milward, 2001; Kenis & Provan, 2009; Cepiku, 2013). From the perspective of this doctoral dissertation, this was especially the case with regard to a tension between effectiveness at the community level and the effectiveness at the organisational level. The latter was understood as the benefits (e.g. cost reduction, acquiring resources or expertise, etc.) network members themselves aimed to realise through their voluntary participation to these networks (Provan & Milward, 2001). This could be related to defensible aspirations of many welfare organisations for installing a shared responsibility through these networks around particularly complex situations they were confronted with, and that led to a high load upon their own internal functioning. Hence, we must take into account the constant search of these organisations to scan the boundaries of what working through networks might yield for them (van Raaij, 2006; De Rynck, 2013), and the repeatedly expressed fear of being flooded with complex client situations when being the only ones leaving the door ajar. Moreover, we must be aware that this understandable effort to realise organisational benefits when working through networks might also diminish their proper incentives to search for solutions and to reflect upon their own admission policies, with the aim of enhancing the overall accessibility and usefulness of their own services for a broader group of citizens as well (also see Quilgars, Fitzpatrick & Pleace, 2011).

Secondly, we acknowledge that the task of evaluating outcomes for clients is also complicated, as there are multiple criteria to rely on when performing an evaluation of network effectiveness at this community level (Kenis & Provan, 2009). This implies

that the original set of criteria, which we distilled from the introduction of a right to social welfare and the need for taking into account the perspective and needs of those being served and targeted, are equally challenged or undermined by a more instrumental driven logic (Allen, 2003; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014). In our study, this tension was reflected in the deliberate creation of several thresholds with which the access to the night shelter, and the opportunities of citizens to become subject of a collective discussion through case consultations, was severely hampered.

7.4 About the mediating role of social work

We now return to the initial problem statement about the ability of bottom-up networks to be a lever for social work to reduce levels of social exclusion, and to reach out to vulnerable groups of citizens by performing its mediating role between the public sphere of government and the private sphere of individuals. In order to perform this political role, social work needs a strong commitment to take into account the perspectives of those being served and targeted (Lorenz, 2008; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007; Driessens & Geldof, 2009). This is especially the case when working through bottom-up networks with the aim of reaching out to very vulnerable groups of citizens that are confronted with multiple needs and face a risk of falling between the cracks of the welfare state. As a result, social work must open up to the inevitable ambiguous character of its practice and maintain a strong a commitment in finding a, by-definition, imperfect or even inadequate way of dealing with the unpredictable character of the demands made by these groups of citizens (Van Bouchoute, 2010; Roose, Roets & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012).

Besides the hampering impact of the institutional context of the welfare state (e.g. due to fragmentation of care, accountability pressure, etc.), our research also revealed another constraining factor when tackling social exclusion through networks. In essence, this could be related to reluctance or hesitation on the part of those who are voluntarily investing resources on behalf of these bottom-up networks themselves. Hence, as network partners primarily make changes in the margins of what they deliver and do not give up a large degree of organizational autonomy when working together through networks, these networks could be considered as mere cooperative networks instead of for example collaborative networks (Mandell & Keast, 2008). As it was shown previously (also see RQ2), this claim could be substantiated by referring to the reluctance of PCSWs and private welfare organisations to overcome or abolish thresholds at the supply side of care (also see

article 3), and an inability to alter dominant conceptualisations of homelessness as a social problem by providing alternative explanations (also see article 4).

As a result, we might point to a relatively limited interpretation of the mediating role of social work for helping to realise social reforms and transforming private troubles and concerns of homeless people into issues of a broader public debate about the position of these vulnerable people within society. This could be equally related to the fact that the right to social welfare merely functions as a symbolic point of reference for the networks under study, or a social protection in times of risk (Cox, 1998; Loosveldt, 2006), instead of being a lever for realising social reforms by using the perspectives and voices of clients to initiate a dialogue about what quality of care should mean for themselves as welfare recipients (Hubeau, 2003; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007).

Furthermore, this doctoral dissertation advances the argument that working through networks can even reinforce the observed tendency of de-politicisation and de-responsibilisation of social work (Specht & Courtney, 1995; Haynes & Mickelson, 1997; Marston & McDonald, 2012). Therefore, it highlights two concrete risks that could manifest as a result of these collaborative endeavours around vulnerable groups of homeless citizens.

The first risk could be associated with the creation of an additional night shelter to avoid people needing to sleep rough involuntarily during four cold winter months. In essence, these night shelter shelters could be considered as both places of safety and places of confrontation, as the key question is about how to facilitate change of individuals while also respecting their free agency (Bowpitt, Dwyer, Sundin, & Weinstein, 2014). Still, the transfer of people from the low-threshold night shelter towards a house on the (social) housing market, or a place within a residential care facility, appeared to be highly problematic in our study. This is due to structural deficits at the supply-side of the (social) housing market and residential care, but equally stems from a lack of development of forceful instruments within these networks with the aim of facilitating this transfer. As such, those who are using the night shelter are basically expected to display a willingness and commitment to overcome their situations themselves. As outlined before, this reliance on self-help capacities could indeed be an important lever for breaking stubborn cycles of dependency upon welfare provision (Lorenz, 2014). Moreover, the restricted availability of the night shelters under study here was justified by network members by making referral to the fear of becoming a ‘hammock’ in which homeless people might easily settle down. This should then imply a risk of tolerating and even institutionalising homelessness (Ellickson, 1992; Jones & Pleace, 2005), and to weaken

the drive of homeless people to be self-responsible for regaining control over their own situations (Grunberg & Eagle, 1990).

Still, we observed that many homeless people eventually lingered in the night shelter as they lacked as yet the necessary skills or capabilities allowing them to adhere to the norms and criteria imposed to them by, for example, housing companies or welfare organisations. In sum, this gives rise to the risk of the night shelter becoming a gatekeeper (Lescrauwaet, 2010; Maeseele, 2012; Bowpitt, Dwyer, Sundin & Weinstein, 2014) and even a repository for those who are excluded elsewhere. Furthermore, due to the fact that there is an additional and qualitative supply for preventing people needing to sleep rough involuntarily during the coldest winter months, the incentive of PCSWs and private welfare organisations to critically reflect upon their own admission policies, with which they restrict access of these people to their own facilities, might also be diminished. In sum, we must point to the danger that the creation of a night shelter might eventually serve as a legitimation of their own policies and leads to a perpetuation of existing mechanisms of social exclusion.

Secondly, we might also refer to the risk of creating so-called 'flash practices' when working through networks. This relates to the fact that ideas, beliefs and projects that are collectively produced might quickly lead to a kind of euphoria (see also Kenis & Provan, 2009) on the part of actors that are involved. This is because these newly-established ideas or practices might firmly ignite but quickly extinguish afterwards while equally dazzling these actors in the meantime. As such, these joint forms of working might pull wool over the eyes, and allow a deceptive sense of safety to nestle in the minds of the welfare organisations that agreed to voluntarily invest some of their scarce organisational time and resources on behalf of these bottom-up networks to realise something they could not have been achieved by working alone (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). At the level of local policy making, this relates, for example, to the need for these networks to not content themselves with the mere signalling of structural deficits with regard to welfare provision to relevant policy makers (Roose et al., 2012). Despite the fact that policy work is indeed a complex and very slow process, they should maintain an awareness and a commitment to translate the needs and concerns of vulnerable groups of homeless people into real 'policy energy' (McGuire & Agranoff, 2011). Hence, only when recognising that there can be no certainty about how to proceed as a policy activist (Marston & McDonald, 2012), network actors will be able to keep debates open and to challenge dominant conceptualisations of a complex problem such as homelessness. This could be done by through the cultural reframing of a social problem and by making the diversity of homelessness experiences more visible (Horsell, 2006; Zuffery, 2008). This should for example help to prevent homelessness being perceived as simply an issue of social order and

nuisance, instead of relating it to a question of social justice (Baillergeau, 2014; Dwyer, Bowpitt, Sundin, & Weinstein, 2015). Moreover, these networks will then also transcend the mere operational level and will be able to perform their political role with regard to the development of new policies (Klijn, 2008).

7.5 Towards a frame of reference when working through networks

As outlined before, this doctoral dissertation argued that working through bottom-up networks has generated renewed opportunities for social work to perform its mediating role between the public and the private spheres, and to tackle social exclusion. Nevertheless, our empirical study on the outcomes of bottom-up networks targeting a vulnerable group of people facing unstable housing situations due to a complex web of financial and psycho-social problems equally revealed that working through network should perhaps be considered as a double-edged sword. As such, we pointed to the risk of reinforcing a de-politicisation of social work by developing a rather technical solution for homelessness, and to rely on a more narrowly defined focus on pre-structured and measurable outcomes.

This reveals an additional question about how to counterbalance the aforementioned pitfalls of working through networks. This was further elaborated in a final article of this doctoral dissertation (De Corte, Verschuere, Roets & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015c). In essence, it is stated that there is a need for developing a frame of reference or value base for those who are working via interorganisational networks as a means to re-organise welfare provision with regard to vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups of citizens. Therefore, referral is made to the introduction of social rights within the context of many post-war Western welfare states. Still, social rights could be interpreted in differing ways (Dean, 2013). Within a contractarian approach, social rights have a formal character and are perceived as freedom rights or choice rights (Dean, 2014). This is in line with a thin conceptualisation of needs, which are considered in a minimal sense as survival needs. As such, social rights could be easily transformed in social obligations since the 'ideal' citizen is the one that makes deliberate choices and displays a sufficient degree of self-responsibility (Clarke, 2005; McNay, 2009). From a solidaristic perspective, however, rights are more substantive and are seen as benefit rights. This is in line with a thick conceptualisation of needs, which relates to what people need in order to flourish as fully-fledged human beings and embraces the social context that embraces and sustains human dignity (Dean, 2010).

Yet, it has been also stated that the concepts of needs might not cover the specificity of interests, aspirations and situations of people who live in poverty, or in a situation of welfare dependency (Dean & Melrose, 1996; Maeseele, 2012). This is because it appears as is there could be a consensus about the social contract in relation to the ways in which human dignity for every individual citizen could be realised (Nussbaum, 2006). Moreover, needs could be too easily interpreted as well, without questioning the lifeworld of people and without resonating with their agency and meaning-making (Dean & Melrose, 1996; Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009). Hence, the issues, crises, and other experiences of people must be used as reference points during this process (Freire, 1973). As a result, we argue it is necessary to combine this human rights approach with a drive to realise social justice, and to incorporate the relational sense of recognition and belonging in social interactions in order to enable vulnerable people to become full members of society (Fraser, 1995). Social rights are then constituted through the naming and claiming of a wide variety of concerns (Biesta, 2011; Roets, Dean & Bouverne-De Bie, in press) via an open-ended and dialogical process of negotiation and learning, in which the targeted individual and also relatives are involved and could speak out for themselves (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009).

With regard to the issue of homelessness, the relevance of this framework could briefly be substantiated by pointing to the problem of voluntary non-take up of social benefits and welfare services (Warin, 2010). This could be especially attributed to the situation of squatters in both municipalities, who do not consider the night shelter as a worthy alternative for 'improving' their own situations (also see article 4). As such, the bottom-up networks under study here do not (yet) reach a significant part of the initial target population of homeless people. Starting from the abovementioned framework, this group of squatters must then not disappear off the radar, but rather there must be a commitment to keep on entering into dialogue with these people. This is because their refusal is not only an administrative matter of non-compatible expectations amongst themselves and welfare organisations, but must also be considered as a political act as it represents a split between the individual and the state. Hence, by maintaining a dialogue with these squatters the usefulness of social services could be called into question, and it allows vulnerable and a barely visible groups within society to express their opinions (Warin, 2010; Daiggneault, Jacobs, & Tereraho, 2012; Maeseele, Bouverne-De Bie, & Roose, 2013).

7.6 Suggestions for further research

Besides emphasising the importance of further testing and refining the abovementioned framework and value basis via additional research on

interorganisational collaboration through networks occurring in other institutional contexts, and established around other complex or 'wicked' problems, we might launch other relevant suggestions for developing a future research agenda as well. In essence, we relate this to the repeated calls for establishing an overall theory of network effectiveness (Provan & Milward, 2001; Mandell, Keast & Agranoff, 2013). Therefore, we consider the categorisation of functional, structural and contextual determinants of network effectiveness (Provan & Milward, 1995; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi, 2009) as a good point of departure for highlighting three important issues arising from the present study on bottom-up networks around a vulnerable group of homeless people in Flemish cities.

First, we make referral to so-called structural determinants of network effectiveness, which could for example be linked to the size and composition of the network, its inner stability or the degree of formalisation (Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi, 2009). In concrete terms, we point to the presence of integration mechanisms. This relates to a question about the governance structure of the network (Kenis & Provan, 2009) and the fact whether there is a central agency present within the network, or not. In fact, the networks under study here are examples of shared participant governed networks, which implies that the challenge of steering network interactions is considered as a task for all network members together. It might, however, be argued that assigning this co-ordinating role to one single organisation, which then performs a role as a lead-organisation, could be a substantial lever in helping to enhance effectiveness of the networks in reaching their goals. After all, previous research has shown that integration via a core agency aiming at co-ordinating the other members is more effective than integration defined through multi-lateral interactions (Provan & Milward, 1995; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Conrad, Cave & Lucas, 2003).

In our view, this co-ordinating task should then be performed by the PCSWs, which already play an important role in the networks within both municipalities under study. To date, the PCSWs do, however, primarily act from their role as being a (public) provider of welfare services in helping to organise and realise welfare provision with regard to this vulnerable group of homeless people. This relates to their strong and valuable commitment in helping to fill in service gaps and to develop creative and pragmatic solutions for acute crisis situations related to homelessness within their municipality. Still, as outlined before, the PCSWs have a double role within the context of the welfare state in Belgium. Hence, starting from their role as local government, the PCSWs are expected to ensure the right to social welfare to which society is bound. For us, this provides an important stepping stone to consider PCSWs as the most appropriate actors to co-ordinate the collaborative endeavours through

networks that are targeting vulnerable groups within society. This implies that PCSWs should then primarily monitor and co-ordinate network interactions from a more strategic stance and to take a helicopter perspective based on the abovementioned framework (also see article 5), which made a strong referral to social rights and social justice. As such, they should equally be enabled to overcome the currently perceived actor-coordinator dichotomy that might confuse other network members and private welfare organisations at the table, and to explore opportunities for enhancing levels of inter-municipal collaboration to tackle homelessness more effectively (also see Termote & De Mol, 2010; De Rynck, Voets, & Wayenberg, 2011; Omzendbrief Decreet Lokaal Sociaal Beleid, 2013; Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014). This should, however, not necessarily imply that the PCSW must unilaterally impose decisions, but rather act as a facilitator that preserves the bottom-up efforts of private welfare actors, captures and bundles their signals, and helps to set things in motion while making referral to important principles of human rights and social justice. In our opinion, it is relevant to further clarify and delineate the position and roles of the PCSWs through further research, especially with regard to levels of social exclusion and the complex character of social problems to be tackled. Moreover, this argument will retain its relevance, even against the background of the recent policy ambitions of the regional Flemish government, in which it is stated that PCSWs must be completely integrated within the administrative apparatus of their respective municipalities during the next couple of years (Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014). This will lead to a situation in which there is just one public authority left (city council) at the local level in Belgium. Nevertheless, even without the presence of a separate an autonomous PCSW within the municipality, the question of how to ensure the right to social welfare for individual citizens will still appear on the local political agenda as city councils and the municipal administration will be urged to take up public responsibility for this task.

A second element could be attributed to the functional determinants of network effectiveness, which are basically about the need for buffering instability and nurturing stability within the network (Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi, 2009). This could be done by solving possible tensions between network members, which might all bring their own interests and agendas to the table. Moreover, it is also about the necessity for creating a favourable ground for effective and productive interaction by promoting information exchange and to build a commitment to the common purpose of the network (McGuire, 2002).

Beginning once more with the abovementioned framework based on social rights and social justice, this doctoral dissertation argues that street corner workers and voluntary organisations are appropriate network members for helping to build these

bridges at the operational level between network actors, and to realise outcomes that actually improve the conditions of life of those being served and targeted. This is because these types of actors have a relatively low threshold, especially when compared to professional residential care facilities, and maintain a relatively broad perspective as they pay attention to very distinct problems and domains of life (Raeymaekers, 2013). As such, they are particularly well placed for capturing the concerns of people and to resonate with the lifeworld and meaning-making processes of vulnerable groups of citizens. During our study, it appeared that street corners workers and voluntary organisations were recognised by other networks as being the 'eyes and the ears' of the network for unravelling the impact of particular network measures directed at the commonly-agreed target population. Moreover, as they cannot provide any residential support to homeless people themselves, their core task is to persuade, challenge and also incite other welfare actors to change their minds or come into action. As such, they are the glue that helps to hold the network together, with important reference to the need for keeping in mind the lifeworld and concerns of those who are served and targeted by the collaborative endeavours.

Further research could then explore the tensions that might arise between them and the professional welfare organisations (La Cour & Hojlund, 2008; Villadsen, 2009). This is because these voluntary and low-thresholds actors do obtain growing responsibilities with regard to social service delivery and support for citizens within the context of the welfare state (La Cour, 2009; Raeymaekers & Van Riel, 2014). Still, this 'transfer' of responsibilities and task towards these voluntary actors might also erode the right to social welfare and herald a return to mere charity as a key allocation principle within welfare provision, as governments and professional welfare organisations are then no longer able or willing to reach out to particular segments of the population (Maeseele, 2012). Therefore, we agree that it is important that professionalised welfare organisations and local governments maintain a commitment to finding a diversity of ways to capture and connect with the experiences, competencies, concerns, etc. that are expressed through these autonomous and low-threshold initiatives carried out by committed citizens (De Rynck & Dezeure, 2009). As such, citizens might be enabled to have a valuable stake in a real participatory and reciprocal process of shaping society and developing social policies with regard to vulnerable groups of citizens. This could eventually help to further strengthen the legal character of social service delivery to hard-to-reach groups of citizens around which these voluntary and low-threshold actors are active.

Thirdly, we might point to the importance of the external environment in moulding the organisations and their performances. This could be related to the contextual determinants of network effectiveness such as the cohesion and support from the

broader community for the network, resource munificence from the external environment, and system stability (Provan & Milward, 1995; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini & Nasi, 2009). Based upon the findings of our study, we relate this to the role of the central government, specifically the regional Flemish government in our case. The main question is then about the way in which central government positions itself in relation to these networks at the local level. This is relevant as the emergence of these bottom-up dynamics might also be considered as an instrument to identify designate and compensate some of the shortcomings and pitfalls of the way in which welfare provision is currently organised.

On the one side, the Flemish government could opt to grant (or just leave) as much space as possible for these bottom-up networks to emerge and perform their role. This stems from the expectation that bottom-up networks could or should be indisputable places of experiment for developing innovative practices (Thorgren, Wincent & Ortqvist, 2009; Stam, 2013) with regard to welfare provision to people who are confronted with multiple problems and that are not yet properly served or reached. The central government could hereby also indirectly support the creation of such local networks by lessening the degrees of regulation and obligations it imposes on local governments (also see Beleidsnota WVG, 2014) and private welfare organisations (also see article 2). This is relevant as these regulations might also diminish the autonomy of the abovementioned actors and hamper their flexibility to respond to these complex situations by developing, for example, alternative working programs, or by serving other target groups than the ones they are expected to serve by central government as their main funding source.

On the other side, it might also be the case that the regional Flemish government displays the ambition to take up a much larger share of responsibility with regard to the development of an overall approach to homelessness. This could, for example, be realised by making deliberate policy choices for (re)arranging the available, but also limited, budget with the aim of expanding capacity (e.g. at the social housing market), to alter the existing welfare supply by focusing more on residential and ambulatory support for people who are located between two policy domains (e.g. primary line care vs. mental health care), to prevent homelessness after a stay in prison or a welfare institution, or due to the fact that tenants are expelled from their (social) rental house, etc. In a similar vein, resources could be made available, in our opinion, for organising additional training programs for social workers, nonprofit managers, civil servants, etc. that are active in related areas with the aim of building up a pool of so-called ‘bridge builders’. These persons might then be flexibly deployed in different concrete projects around vulnerable groups or particular themes within their own municipalities or regions to overcome organisational and sectoral borders, and to

facilitate interaction based upon their own practical experience and the knowledge they acquired via these training programs about procedures and regulations from different policy fields and about the functioning and co-ordinating of networks.

Furthermore, we argue that the Flemish government should also confine the fragmented way in which its proper welfare administration is organised in strictly separated policy fields. With regard to the topic of homelessness, this doctoral dissertation argues, however, that such future reforms must also recognise and valorise the existing dynamics and initiatives that have already been developed at the local level between various policy fields (such as welfare, housing, mental health care, and disability care) in order to realise a wide support base for these bottom-up initiatives and to promote their strengths and impact for citizens as welfare recipients. This is important as we observed in recent years, for example, attempts to re-structure the field of 'youth care' in Flanders with the aim of enhancing the accessibility of care by overcoming fragmentation between the various welfare actors that are involved around young people. Still, this reform was also criticised as it has been implemented in a rather top-down manner and also resulted in the affirmation of the existing welfare siloes or containers, and the corresponding exclusion mechanisms (Roose, 2006; Naert, Linssen & Haudenhuyse, 2014).

In sum, this implies the need for the central government to find a balance between capturing signals and valorising the benefits of autonomously functioning bottom-up initiatives, while equally suppressing an inclination to stifle those who are involved within these networks by imposing an extensive set of rules and standards. Otherwise, the central government might shoot themselves in the foot by curtailing the flexible and possible innovative character of these bottom-up networks, which make them appealing instruments to compensate shortfalls with regard to current supply of welfare provision for citizens.

7.7 Returning to the interdisciplinary character of this dissertation

In this doctoral dissertation, we dealt with a set of key questions that were of central concern within social work scholarship. Nonetheless, as we also relied on several conceptual and theoretical frameworks that were more extensively developed within the field of public administration to answer these questions, this study eventually obtained an interdisciplinary character. In this section, we will distil three key findings that are of particular importance for helping to advance academic scholarship with

regard to the relationship between the public and the private sector for organising welfare provision (Isset, Mergel, LeRoux, Mischen, & Rethemeyer, 2011).

First, we might acknowledge that particular premises within public administration scholarship about the roles and expected behaviours of private welfare organisations, that makes them appealing partners from the perspective of government for helping to implement but also develop social policies within the context of the welfare state, must perhaps be approached with more caution. These assumptions primarily stemmed from the unique position of these private welfare organisations close to citizens and their greater trustworthiness vis-à-vis clients and welfare recipients due to the non-distribution constraint (Salamon, 1995; Boris & Steuerle, 1999; Boyle & Butler, 2003; Huxham, 2003; Anheier, 2005). As such, it was expected that these private welfare organisations had greater opportunities than governments for tailoring services to clients' needs and would also defend the interests or minority preferences of the vulnerable and often overlooked groups they aim to represent at the level of policy making (Snavely & Desai, 2001; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004).

Still, our analysis about the functioning of private welfare organisations via bottom-up networks as a means to organise welfare provision to vulnerable groups of citizens reveals that these private welfare actors are equally driven by an organisational self-interest and a desire to secure those resources that are the most scarce for them (Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Furthermore, during the assessment of network effectiveness at the community level, we were able to highlight the inevitable field of tension between a client-centred approach to welfare provision and a more instrumental driven logic as well (Rodriguez, Langley, Beland, & Denis, 2007; McGuire & Agranoff, 2011; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014). Hence, as the latter primarily relates to the efficient use of resources and the development of a preference for pre-structured and measurable outcomes, this might thus easily undermine the abovementioned premise about private welfare organisations that choose, by definition, the side of the weakest and most vulnerable ones within society.

Secondly, we might state that this doctoral dissertation provides substantial ammunition to substantiate the claims about the need for assessing network effectiveness as a multidimensional variable (Provan & Milward, 2001; Provan & Kenis, 2007; Klijn, 2007; Cepiku, 2013). As outlined before, we relate this to different levels of analysis on which the analysis might be performed and that can work against one another. Moreover, we agree that every decision about the concrete criteria relied on when performing this evaluation is in fact a normative decision, as every

criterion could be a valid one and could not by definition be considered as a 'good' or a 'bad' one (Kenis & Provan, 2009).

Nonetheless, this dissertation aims to enhance awareness amongst scholars to not ignore the assessment of network effectiveness at the community level, and to rely on a set of client-centred criteria in which the perspective of those being served and targeted via these collaborative endeavours is fully taken into account (Roose & De Bie, 2003). Hence, this should imply that besides the vast amount of literature that is produced on functional matters, such as the structure of the network or the nature of the interaction between network members (see for example Provan, Fish, & Sydow, 2007; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi 2009), renewed attention should be paid to the normative question about why to intervene through these networks, and to clarify the frame of reference and value base on which we could rely. In sum, this commitment to not ignore or minimise the inevitable value conflicts is especially relevant with regard to the fact that bottom-up networks are mainly active around vulnerable groups that find themselves at the margins of society, and face a risk of being socially excluded within the context of the welfare state (Klijn, 2008; Stam, 2013).

Our final remark is then about the shift from government to governance and the repeated claims on the blurring of boundaries between the public and private sectors (Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998). The latter has been associated the rise of horizontal forms of collaborations through networks, which granted private welfare organisations with greater opportunities to obtain a substantial benefit not only in implementing social policies but also in helping to develop them (Pierre, 2000; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009; Koliba, Meek & Zia, 2011).

The networks under study in this doctoral dissertation were, however, primarily active at the operational level of welfare provision to citizens. The rise of these bottom-up networks must indeed be considered as a reaction on the perceived shortcomings of the welfare state in organising social service delivery to vulnerable groups of citizens facing complex and multidimensional problems. Moreover, we equally highlighted some difficulties for these bottom-up networks to get a firm grip on the process of policy development at the local level, and to convert their operational projects and/or indignation into real 'policy energy' (McGuire & Agranoff, 2011:269). This implies that they were able to have an impact on the agenda of local policy makers (also see Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2013), but appeared to be far less able to provide alternative explanations for homelessness and to break open dominant conceptualisations of homelessness as being mainly a problem of social order and nuisance reduction. Nonetheless, we might equally state that in our opinion this difference between the public and private

sectors, even when working intensively together through networks, should also be maintained to some extent. This is because we agree that governments will never be equal partners within these collaborative endeavours, as it is the public actors that are ultimately held accountable for the satisfactory delivery of public goods and welfare services (Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997; McGuire, 2006). This relates well to the abovementioned role and position for the PCSWs, as being both a public welfare provider and a government at the local level in Belgium, to ensure the legal character of welfare provision, especially with regard to vulnerable groups of citizens.

7.8 References

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Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Lokaal Sociaal Beleid en toegankelijkheid van de maatschappelijke dienstverlening. Een onderzoek naar de relatie tussen lokale besturen en private non-profit organisaties.

Korte situering

Voorliggend doctoraatsonderzoek vertrekt vanuit een bijzondere interesse voor de praktijk van het zogenaamde 'joined-up working' binnen het sociaal werk (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat & Vandenbroeck, 2014). Deze interesse wordt in belangrijke mate gewekt door de tendens tot het creëren van inter-organisationele netwerken waarbinnen verschillende actoren zoals lokale overheden en private welzijnsvoorzieningen samenwerken om de maatschappelijke dienstverlening ten aanzien van burgers te organiseren (Klijn, 2008). De focus werd in dit doctoraatsonderzoek afgebakend tot een onderzoek naar zogenaamde 'bottom-up' netwerken (Marcussen & Torfing, 2003; Kenis & Provan, 2009). Dit soort netwerken wordt immers niet bij wet of decreet opgelegd, maar ze ontstaan juist van onderuit en vanuit het vrijwillig en doorgedreven engagement van bezorgde sociaal werkers die autonoom beslissen om te gaan samenwerken rond een bepaalde problematiek of doelgroep waarvoor men als individuele welzijnsactor geen pasklare oplossing (meer) kan bieden (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010).

We situeren de algemene trend tot netwerkvorming, en die van bottom-up netwerken in het bijzonder, tegen de achtergrond van processen van sociale uitsluiting zoals die zich vandaag in vele Westerse samenlevingen manifesteren (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Williams, 1999; Elchardus, Marx & Pelleriaux, 2003; Deleeck & Cantillon, 2008; Biesta, 2011). Deze sociale uitsluiting vloeit in de eerste plaats voort uit de gefragmenteerde wijze waarop de voorbije decennia vorm werd gegeven aan de uitbouw van het zorglandschap in de context van de welvaartsstaat. Dit heeft immers geleid tot het ontstaan van een reeks aparte 'hokjes' of 'kokers' en de ontwikkeling van een eigen wet- en regelgeving binnen de diverse beleidsdomeinen om specifieke doelgroepen en werkprocessen af te bakenen (Allen & Sprigings, 2001; Allen, 2003; Andrews & Entwistle, 2010). Op die manier werden diverse drempels aan de aanbodzijde van de hulpverlening gecreëerd en lopen burgers met andere woorden een verhoogd risico om tussen de mazen van het net te vallen inzake maatschappelijke dienstverlening (Dwyer, Bowpitt, Sundin, & Weinstein, 2015). Dit is zeker het geval in het licht van de zogenaamde 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973) of complexe sociale problemen waarbij de hulpvraag van burgers niet beperkt is

tot één enkel aspect of levensdomein maar voortvloeit uit een combinatie van meerdere problematieken die op elkaar inwerken (Clarke & Stewart, 1997; Ferlie, Fitzgerald, McGivern, Dopson, & Bennett, 2011).

Ten tweede werden deze processen van sociale uitsluiting ook versterkt door de groeiende erkenning van het belang van individuele autonomie en de nadruk op de kracht en capaciteiten van burgers. Deze nadruk op individuele autonomie heeft uiteindelijk ook geleid tot een focus op de individuele verantwoordelijkheid van burgers om zelfredzaam te zijn binnen de context van de welvaartsstaat (Kessl, 2009; Lorenz, 2014). Dit wordt in vele Westerse samenlevingen weerspiegeld in de tendens tot de vermaatschappelijking van de zorg maar ook in de evolutie naar de activerende welvaartsstaat waarin het verwerven van betaald werk wordt gezien als de meest duurzame uitweg uit de armoede (Giddens, 1998; Leggett, 2004; Ferguson, 2004; Adams, 2012).

De combinatie van bovenstaande factoren heeft er toe geleid dat een omvangrijke groep van burgers in een relatief kwetsbare positie is terecht gekomen binnen de context van de welvaartsstaat omdat men (nog) niet over de juiste kennis of vaardigheden beschikt om deze drempels te overwinnen of om te voldoen aan de groeiende verwachtingen die hen worden opgelegd (Clarke, 2005; Kessl, 2009; Welbourne, 2011; Lorenz, 2014).

De probleemstelling die in dit doctoraatsonderzoek centraal staat, houdt verband met de vraag of de bottom-up netwerken een hefboom kunnen zijn voor het sociaal werk om sociale uitsluiting te vermijden en de hand te reiken aan een kwetsbare groep van burgers die geen toegang (meer) heeft tot de maatschappelijke dienstverlening zoals die wordt georganiseerd via de welvaartsstaat.

De trend tot netwerkvorming stelt met andere woorden de vraag naar de rol en positie van het sociaal werk in de samenleving opnieuw op scherp. Vanuit een historisch perspectief op de ontwikkeling van de welvaartsstaat neemt het sociaal werk immers een relatief autonome tussenpositie in als een ‘mediator’ of bemiddelaar tussen de publieke sfeer van de overheid en de private sfeer van individuen en families (Lorenz, 2008). Dit betekent dat het sociaal werk naast een focus op het microniveau van de individuele hulpverlening aan burgers ook een politieke rol vervult. Deze politieke rol situeert zich op het macroniveau van de beleidsvorming en houdt verband met de wijze waarop het sociaal werk vorm geeft aan de notie solidariteit tijdens de interactie met burgers en de wijze waarop het individuele noden, behoeften en bekommernissen van burgers tot voorwerp van een

breder publiek debat kan maken (Jordan & Parton, 2004; Driessens & Geldof, 2009; Bouverne-De Bie, 2014; Lorenz, 2014).

Opbouw

Dit doctoraatsonderzoek bestaat uit zeven hoofdstukken: naast een inleiding en besluit zijn er vijf aparte artikels waarin telkens wordt ingegaan op één of meer specifieke vragen die verband houden met de centrale probleemstelling. De artikels kunnen bovendien worden onderverdeeld in twee delen: daar waar de eerste twee artikels (zie hoofdstuk 2 & 3) peilen naar de voedingsbodem voor het ontstaan van bottom-up netwerken, focussen de laatste drie artikels (zie hoofdstuk 4, 5 & 6) op de evaluatie van de effectiviteit van deze netwerken en de 'outcomes' die worden gerealiseerd voor burgers zelf.

Het *eerste deel* van dit doctoraatsonderzoek is gebaseerd op kwantitatieve data afkomstig van een large-N survey van 255 managers van private welzijnsvoorzieningen. Het betreft een selectie van professionele voorzieningen met betaalde werkkrachten die in één van de dertien Vlaamse centrumsteden actief zijn in één van de volgende welzijnsdomeinen: armoedebestrijding, ouderenzorg, bijzondere jeugdzorg of de integratie van etnisch-culturele minderheden. De managers van deze organisaties werden bevraagd over de dienstverlenende en meer expressieve rollen die ze vervullen in de samenleving (Salamon & Anheier, 1999; Snavely & Desai, 2001; Salamon, Sokolowski, & Associates, 2004), de verschillende dimensies van de relatie die ze ontwikkelden met overheden op het federale, regionale en lokale beleidsniveau (Whitaker, Altman-Sauer, & Henderson, 2004; Anheier, 2005) en de impact die deze relaties hadden op het uitoefenen van bovenvermelde rollen en op het intern beheer van de eigen organisatie (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Jung & Moon, 2007).

In dit eerste deel lag de focus op de voedingsbodem voor het ontstaan van bottom-up netwerken rond complexe sociale problemen waarin lokale besturen en private welzijnsvoorzieningen die op het grondgebied van de stad/gemeente actief zijn een gedeeld belang hebben. Dit is een relevante vraag gelet op het vrijwillige en dus per definitie ook kwetsbare engagement van de betrokken actoren en organisaties om tijd en middelen te investeren ten behoeve van de netwerken waarin ze betrokken zijn (McGuire & Agranoff, 2007; Gazley & Brudney, 2007). Daarnaast is het belangrijk te wijzen op twee factoren die mogelijk een belemmerende impact kunnen hebben op de incentive van lokale besturen en private welzijnsvoorzieningen om hun wederzijdse relatie te verdiepen. Deze factoren zijn beide gelinkt aan de wijze waarop de welvaartsstaat in België zich de afgelopen decennia heeft ontwikkeld (Verschuere & De Rynck, 2009). Enerzijds is er de beperkte financiële band met de lokale overheid

omdat de private welzijnsvoorzieningen in hoofdzaak worden gefinancierd en aangestuurd door de centrale overheid en dan vooral door de regionale Vlaamse overheid (zie hoofdstuk 2). Anderzijds moeten we ook wijzen op de relatief hoge verantwoordingsdruk die door de regionale Vlaamse overheid wordt uitgeoefend ten aanzien van deze private welzijnsvoorzieningen en die is gekoppeld aan het toekennen van publieke middelen (zie hoofdstuk 3).

In het tweede hoofdstuk, getiteld '*A typology for the relationship between local governments and nonprofit organizations in welfare state regimes*' (De Corte & Verschuere, 2014b) maken we gebruik van een conceptuele typologie (Kuhnle & Selle, 1990) om inzicht te verwerven in de één op één relatie tussen private welzijnsactoren en lokale overheden. We richten de focus daartoe op de mate van integratie tussen deze private welzijnsvoorzieningen en het lokaal bestuur van de stad waarin ze actief zijn. Dit werd geoperationaliseerd in termen van directe formele en informele contacten met lokale beleidsmakers zoals politici en administraties. Uit de rapportering door de managers bleek dat, ondanks de relatief beperkte financiële band op dit lokale bestuursniveau, toch iets meer dan de helft van de private voorzieningen aangaf dergelijke directe contacten en communicatie met lokale beleidsmakers te ontwikkelen en op regelmatige basis te onderhouden. Dit wijst met andere woorden op een bepaalde mate van dynamiek en integratie tussen lokaal bestuur enerzijds en de centraal gefinancierde en aangestuurde private welzijnsvoorzieningen anderzijds.

In het derde hoofdstuk, getiteld '*Public nonprofit partnerships: does public funding affect the autonomy of nonprofit decision making*' (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014) vertrekken we van een kader dat is gebaseerd op de 'resource dependence theory' (Froelich, 1999; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). De relatie met de overheid werd enerzijds geoperationaliseerd via het relatieve aandeel van de diverse overheidsniveaus (federaal, Vlaams en lokaal) in het totale budget van de private welzijnsvoorziening en anderzijds via de mate van verantwoordingsdruk waaraan private voorzieningen werden blootgesteld op de verschillende overheidsniveaus. Dit werd gemeten aan de hand van een reeks parameters waarover men al dan niet verantwoording moest afleggen op de onderscheiden overheidsniveaus, zoals de kwantiteit van de dienstverlening, de kwaliteit van de dienstverlening, de doelgroepen die werden bereikt, de maatschappelijke effecten die werden bereikt, enz. (Ospina, Diaz, & O'Sullivan, 2002; Whitaker, Altman-Sauer, & Henderson, 2004; Cho & Gillespie, 2006; May, 2007).

Uit de statistische Anova-testen bleek vervolgens dat de mate van financiering en de mate van verantwoordingsdruk uitgeoefend door het regionale Vlaamse

bestuursniveau een significante negatieve impact hadden op de mate van de gepercipieerde autonomie van de voorzieningen in het nemen van strategische beslissingen zoals het bepalen van de doelgroepen die men wil bedienen, de werkprocedures die men ontwikkelt, de resultaten die men wil behalen, enz. Dit wijst op een gevaar dat de private voorzieningen vooral een uitvoerder zouden worden van wat de centrale (Vlaamse) overheid hen opdraagt te doen (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Boyle & Butler, 2003; Jung & Moon, 2007). Dit impliceert met andere woorden dat er mogelijks minder ruimte en flexibiliteit is om ook tijd en middelen te investeren ten behoeve van bijkomende engagementen zoals diegene die worden opgenomen in het kader van bottom-up netwerken met de lokale besturen en andere private voorzieningen. In het bovenvermelde artikel werd de 'impact' van de sturing door de Vlaamse overheid op het interne beheer van de private voorzieningen echter ook genuanceerd. Hiertoe baseren we ons op een verdere analyse van de vier aparte strategische organisatiebeslissingen die werden bevraagd. Hieruit bleek onder meer dat private voorzieningen deze beslissingen vaak zien als het resultaat van een proces tussen henzelf en de overheid als gelijkwaardige partners en dat er verschillen waren in de mate van interferentie van de overheid en gepercipieerde autonomie naargelang het soort strategische beslissing.

Uit het tweede en derde hoofdstuk blijkt dus dat, ondanks de mogelijk belemmerende impact van een aantal contextuele factoren die gelinkt zijn aan de wijze waarop de welvaartsstaat in België werd uitgebouwd (zie o.a. Verschuere & De Rynck, 2009), er wel degelijk dynamieken en interacties aanwezig zijn tussen de lokale besturen en de private welzijnsvoorzieningen die op hetzelfde grondgebied actief zijn. Dit is een relevante bevinding in het licht van onze focus op de voedingsbodem voor het ontstaan van bottom-up netwerken op het lokale niveau, mede omdat deze bijkomende lokale netwerken een aantal tekortkomingen of 'hiaten' inzake maatschappelijke dienstverlening in de context van de welvaartsstaat juist kunnen helpen te vermijden of op te lossen.

Het *tweede deel* van dit doctoraatsonderzoek is gebaseerd op een interpretatieve case study van bottom-up netwerken in twee Vlaamse centrumsteden (Kortrijk en Hasselt) rond de problematiek van dak- en thuisloosheid. Deze werd beschouwd als een goed voorbeeld van een zogenaamd 'wicked issue' omdat dak- en thuislozen niet enkel een stabiele huisvestingssituatie missen maar vaak ook geconfronteerd worden met een combinatie van één of meerdere andere problemen zoals financiële problemen, het verlies van een eigen sociaal netwerk ('ontankering'), een psychiatrische aandoening, een verslavingsproblematiek, enz. (Anderson & Christian, 2003; Larsen, Poortinga, & Hurdle, 2004; European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), 2009; Lee, Tyler & Wright,

2010). Dit impliceert dan weer dat meerdere welzijnsactoren, zowel publieke (bvb OCMW) als private uit verschillende beleidsdomeinen (bvb Algemeen Welzijnswerk, Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg, enz.), minstens ten dele betrokken zijn rond dak- en thuisloosheid. Bovendien werd de noodzaak voor het vinden van afstemming en samenwerking rond deze problematiek in België en Vlaanderen reeds meermaals bepleit via eerder onderzoek (zie bvb Van Regenmortel, Demeyer, Vandenbempt, & Van Damme, 2006; Termote & De Mol, 2010). De kwalitatieve data werden verzameld via een analyse van beleidsdocumenten en documenten van en over de netwerken in beide steden, via een reeks van semigestructureerde interviews met sociaal werkers en managers die betrokken waren in deze netwerken en via directe observaties van vergaderingen van de netwerken in beide steden.

Dit tweede onderzoeksdeel vertrok bovendien van de vaststelling in de academische literatuur dat er vaak weinig aandacht wordt besteed aan het thema van de zogenaamde 'netwerk effectiviteit' (Bardach, 1998; McGuire & Agranoff, 2007). Volgens sommigen heeft dit overigens ook geleid tot een zekere vorm van 'network euforie' (Kenis & Provan, 2009:440) waarbij samenwerking per definitie als een positieve evolutie werd onthaald die ten goede zou komen aan burgers (Allen, 2003; Frost, 2005; Roets, Roose, Schiettecat, & Vandenbroeck, 2014). Dit hangt mede samen met het feit dat de analyse van netwerk effectiviteit een complex vraagstuk is dat op meerdere analyseniveaus kan worden uitgevoerd: het organisatieniveau, het netwerkniveau en het gemeenschaps- of cliëntniveau (Provan & Milward, 2001; Provan & Kenis, 2007; Cepiku, 2013). In dit doctoraatsonderzoek houden we echter vooral een pleidooi om bij de evaluatie van (bottom-up) netwerken ook steeds het cliëntniveau mee te nemen. Hieronder verstaan we de bijdrage die deze netwerken kunnen leveren aan het verbeteren van de leefomstandigheden van de burgers die men via deze netwerken bedient of tot wie men zicht richt (Provan & Milward, 2001).

Een bijkomende moeilijkheid is bovendien dat de analyse van de effectiviteit van een netwerk op het cliëntniveau kan worden uitgevoerd via verschillende logica's waaruit dan specifieke criteria worden afgeleid om het 'succes' of de 'outcomes' van netwerken te beoordelen (Kenis & Provan, 2009). In dit doctoraatsonderzoek maakten we daartoe een onderscheid tussen een instrumentele en een cliëntgerichte logica. Binnen de instrumentele logica staat het efficiënt gebruik van de schaarse middelen centraal en worden burgers hoofdzakelijk toegeleid naar een kwalitatief maar vaak ook voorgestructureerd en vaststaand aanbod (McGuire, 2002; Rodriguez, Langley, Beland, & Denis, 2007; McGuire & Agranoff, 2011). Daar tegenover staat de cliëntgerichte logica waarin ook het perspectief, de noden en de leefwereld van de cliënt/burger zelf worden weerspiegeld en waarbij dus ook rekening kan worden gehouden met het eerder onvoorspelbare karakter van de hulpvraag van burgers die

met een complexe en multidimensionale problematiek worden geconfronteerd (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; Roets, Dean, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2014).

In het vierde hoofdstuk '*Bottom-up networks for welfare provision to citizens: getting a grip on processes of social exclusion by evaluating network effectiveness*' (De Corte, Verschuere, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015a) staat de analyse van de effectiviteit van netwerken centraal en wordt verwezen naar het belang van sociale grondrechten in de welvaartsstaat. Dit laat ons bovendien toe om een aantal criteria af te leiden die het perspectief van de (kwetsbare) burger helpen te reflecteren bij het evalueren van de effectiviteit van deze bottom-up netwerken rond dak- en thuisloosheid. Dit betekent concreet dat er werd gefocust op de bruikbaarheid, de begrijpbaarheid, de beschikbaarheid, de bereikbaarheid en de betaalbaarheid van de maatschappelijke dienstverlening die voor de doelgroep van dak- en thuislozen werd gerealiseerd via deze netwerken (Roose & De Bie, 2003).

Uit de analyse bleek dat de bottom-up netwerken alvast fungeerden als instrumenten om de negatieve gevolgen van fragmentering en versnippering op het microniveau van de individuele dienstverlening aan dak- en thuislozen op te vangen. Dit werd bijvoorbeeld gerealiseerd door het wegwerken van bepaalde hiaten in de hulpverlening via de gezamenlijke creatie van een bijkomende nachtopvang tijdens de winter of via een (gedeeltelijke) revisie via regelmatig cliëntoverleg tussen de partners in het netwerk van het reeds bestaande aanbod en een kritische reflectie over de (in)formele toelatingscriteria die in het reguliere hulpverleningscircuit werden gehanteerd ten aanzien van dak- en thuislozen. Toch bleek ook het spanningsveld aan de oppervlakte te komen tussen de cliëntgerichte logica en de meer instrumentele logica. Deze laatste werd bijvoorbeeld gereflecteerd in het behouden van bestaande drempels of invoeren van bijkomende drempels die de toegankelijkheid en beschikbaarheid van het hulpverleningsaanbod belemmerden.

In het vijfde hoofdstuk, getiteld '*The political role of social work: grasping the momentum of working through interorganizational networks*' (De Corte, Verschuere, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015b), ligt de nadruk op de rol van deze netwerken als een forum of een plaats voor een breder debat over de problematiek van dak- en thuisloosheid. Dit werd gekoppeld aan het feit dat netwerken worden gekenmerkt door een 'negotiated rationality' (Scharpf, 1997) via horizontale en niet-hiërarchische relaties tussen autonome organisaties, de uitwisseling van informatie en hun specifieke expertises en het zoeken naar wederzijdse afstemming via processen van onderhandeling (O'Toole, 1997; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009). Het artikel toonde aan dat deze debatten in het kader van netwerkvorming zich op meerdere niveaus konden situeren. Op het niveau van het netwerk als geheel gingen deze debatten bijvoorbeeld

over de definiëring van de toegangspoort tot een cliëntoverleg of over de wijze waarop en de termijnen waarbinnen de toegang tot de nachtopvang voor dak- en thuislozen werd gegarandeerd. Op het niveau van de individuele organisaties werden ook diverse voorbeelden gevonden van interne debatten bij netwerk partners over drempels die men zelf opwerpt ten aanzien van de doelgroep van dak- en thuislozen. Dit betekent dat er diverse uitzonderingen werden gemaakt op de eigen criteria door de welzijnsvoorzieningen (bvb in het kader van afspraken gemaakt tijdens een gemeenschappelijk cliëntoverleg) met het oog op het verhogen van de toegankelijkheid van het eigen aanbod. Toch hadden deze uitzonderingen meestal een beperkte reikwijdte en werden ze enkel toegepast op de specifieke situatie van bepaalde personen. Op het niveau van het lokaal beleid merkten we tenslotte dat de netwerken enerzijds de problematiek van dak- en thuisloosheid via hun operationele projecten (zoals bvb een nachtopvang) wel op de agenda van lokale beleidsmakers kregen, maar er anderzijds (nog) niet in slaagden een meer fundamenteel debat over de dominante beeldvorming rond dak- en thuisloosheid te voeren op dit niveau.

Het zesde hoofdstuk, met als titel '*Uncovering the double-edged sword of inter-organizational networks of welfare services: tackling wicked issues in social work*' (De Corte, Verschuere, Roets, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2015c), kan dan worden beschouwd als een meer conceptueel gedreven bijdrage waarin het vermogen van bottom-up netwerken om zowel problemen gerelateerd aan de fragmentering van het aanbod aan te pakken als het voeren van bredere discussies over complexe sociale problemen verder wordt uitgewerkt. Daarnaast wordt ook gefocust op de mogelijke gevaren of valkuilen die zijn verbonden aan het werken via netwerken om de maatschappelijke dienstverlening voor burgers te organiseren. Het centrale argument van deze bijdrage is gerelateerd aan de noodzaak tot het ontwikkelen van een gedeeld referentiekader dat is gebaseerd op sociale rechten en sociale rechtvaardigheid wanneer men via (bottom-up) netwerken samenwerkt rond de complexe problematieken van kwetsbare doelgroepen (Grunwald & Thiersch, 2009; Roets, Dean, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2014).

Enkele concluderende reflecties

In het zevende en laatste hoofdstuk keren we tenslotte terug naar de initiële probleemstelling van voorliggend doctoraatsonderzoek over de rol van bottom-up netwerken als hefbomen voor het sociaal werk om sociale ongelijkheid en sociale uitsluiting aan te pakken. In de voorgaande hoofdstukken werd reeds uitvoerig geargumenteerd dat deze netwerken een potentieel krachtig instrument zijn voor het sociaal werk om de mediërende rol in te vullen door het combineren van een micro perspectief inzake maatschappelijke dienstverlening aan burgers (bvb wegwerken van

fragmentering en drempels) met een macro perspectief via het voeren van een breder debat over complexe sociale problemen op verschillende niveaus.

Toch werd tijdens het voeren van het onderzoek ook duidelijk dat deze mediërende rol tussen de publieke en private sfeer eerder op een beperkte manier werd ingevuld door de verschillende welzijnsvoorzieningen die betrokken zijn in bovenvermelde netwerken. Dit hangt grotendeels samen met een rechtmatig streven van de voorzieningen om via hun vrijwillige participatie aan netwerken ook zelf bepaalde middelen te vrijwaren of resultaten te boeken die ten goede komen aan de eigen organisatie. Op die manier komt dus ook het onvermijdelijke spanningsveld tussen de effectiviteit van het netwerk op het organisatieniveau en de effectiviteit op het cliëntniveau tot uiting. Dit kan dan ook aanleiding geven tot terughoudendheid bij de voorzieningen om drempels die de toegang tot de hulpverlening belemmeren weg te werken of om dominante logica's en beeldvorming met betrekking dak- en thuisloosheid zowel intern als extern tot voorwerp van een structureel debat te maken. Dit impliceert bovendien een relatief beperkte of minimalistische invulling van het recht op maatschappelijke dienstverlening, zoals het werd geïntroduceerd door de OCMW-wet, als een symbolisch referentiepunt en als ondersteuning van burgers in tijden van crisis (Cox, 1998; Loosveldt, 2006) in de plaats van de (onvoorspelbare) noden en bekommernissen van de dak- en thuislozen te gebruiken als startpunt voor een wederkerige dialoog over wat kwaliteitsvolle en toegankelijke hulpverlening voor deze doelgroep zou betekenen (Hubeau, 2003; Bouverne-De Bie, 2007).

In het afsluitende hoofdstuk wordt ook verwezen naar twee mogelijke risico's die verbonden zijn aan het organiseren van de maatschappelijke dienstverlening ten aanzien van kwetsbare burgers zoals dak- en thuislozen via bottom-up netwerken. Enerzijds moeten de betrokken actoren receptief zijn en blijven voor het gevaar dat de hulp-en dienstverlening die via deze netwerken wordt georganiseerd, kan fungeren als buffer of 'poortwachter' ten aanzien van de reguliere hulpverlening en uiteindelijk ook wordt aangewend om de wijze waarop deze reguliere hulpverlening werkt te legitimeren (Lescrauwaet, 2010; Maeseele, 2012; Bowpitt, Dwyer, Sundin, & Weinstein, 2014). Hierdoor worden de reeds bestaande uitsluitingsmechanismen verder bestendigd. Dit werd toegelicht aan de hand van een aantal concrete voorbeelden zoals de situatie van krakers en hun zogenaamde 'non-take up' (Warin, 2010). Dit hangt samen met het feit dat deze groep van krakers de nachtopvang (nog) niet beschouwden als een volwaardig alternatief of instrument om hun situatie te verbeteren. Daarnaast werd er ook op gewezen dat de doorstroom van gebruikers van de nachtopvang naar het reguliere hulpverleningscircuit of de (sociale) huisvestingsmarkt vaak moeizaam verloopt waardoor er een risico is dat de

nachtopvang uiteindelijk ook een 'vergaarbak' wordt voor burgers die nergens anders (meer) terecht kunnen.

Een tweede gevaar schuilt in de zogenaamde 'steekvlampraktijken' die kunnen ontstaan vanuit deze bottom-up netwerken. Dit kan worden gelinkt aan de eerder vermelde 'network euphoria' (Kenis & Provan, 2009:440) en de verwachting dat men via deze netwerken een zogenaamd 'collaborative advantage' zal realiseren (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). De verwijzing naar een steekvlam impliceert dat de projecten of signalen die door een netwerk worden gelanceerd heel fel kunnen ontbranden, maar daarna evengoed ook snel weer kunnen uitdoven. Dit hangt bijvoorbeeld samen met het vrijwillige en dus ook fluctuerende karakter van de engagementen die ten behoeve van deze bottom-up netwerken worden opgenomen, maar evengoed met het feit dat netwerkactoren kunnen botsen op de fragmentering van de zorg en de grenzen die door de regelgeving van de Vlaamse overheid werden opgetrokken met betrekking tot de problematiek van dak- en thuisloosheid. Dergelijke belemmeringen kunnen zich verder ook situeren in de terughoudendheid van lokale besturen om mee te stappen in een breder verhaal rond dak- en thuisloosheid (bvb wegens een vrees voor het uitoefenen van een aanzuigeffect op de omringende regio) waardoor het voor een netwerk moeilijk wordt om signalen om te zetten in 'policy energy' (McGuire & Agranoff, 2011) en te wegen op het lokaal beleid. De metafoor van de steekvlam verwijst dan naar het feit dat men het loutere niveau van het signaleren niet overstijgt en het gevaar ontstaat dat de betrokken actoren en netwerken deels 'in slaap worden gewiegd' waardoor ook de 'sense of urgency' wordt gereduceerd om meer structurele debatten te initiëren. De blijvende erkenning van de ambiguïteit van het werken via deze netwerken rond een complexe doelgroep als dak- en thuislozen is echter een noodzakelijke voorwaarde om via de concrete praktijken telkens weer rekening te houden met het onvoorspelbare karakter van de hulpvraag, om dominante logica's en beeldvorming uit te dagen en uiteindelijk ook structurele veranderingen te helpen realiseren (Roose, Roets, & Bouverne-De Bie, 2012).

Om deze risico's te vermijden en het functioneren van de bottom-up netwerken te faciliteren wordt niet alleen verwezen naar het belang van een overkoepelend referentiekader waarin de noden, bezorgdheden en leefwereld van de doelgroep van het netwerk centraal staan (zie hoofdstuk 6), maar ook naar een drietal andere factoren die een rol spelen als determinanten van netwerk effectiviteit (Provan & Milward, 1995; Turrini, Christofoli, Frosini, & Nasi 2009). Dit houdt verband met de nood aan het verder ontwikkelen van een meer overkoepelend kader en theorie over het thema van de netwerk effectiviteit (Provan & Milward, 2001; Mandell, Keast, & Agranoff, 2013).

Op het niveau van de structuur van het netwerk gaat het over de aanwezigheid van een centrale actor die de coördinatie van dergelijke bottom-up netwerken verzorgt (Provan & Milward, 1995; Kenis & Provan, 2009) en de specifieke rol die OCMW's en/ of lokale besturen hierbij kunnen vervullen vanuit de ambitie om een recht op maatschappelijke dienstverlening voor elke burger te verzekeren en duidelijkheid te scheppen inzake de dichotomie tussen de actor- en regierol die aan het lokaal bestuur en het OCMW werd toegekend (zie ook Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering, 2014).

Op het niveau van het functioneren van het netwerk gaat het over het faciliteren van de interactie tussen de partners van het netwerk (McGuire, 2002) en de specifieke rol van laagdrempelige voorzieningen zoals straathoekwerkers en vrijwilligersorganisaties als 'vision keepers' binnen het netwerk. Deze organisaties hanteren immers een breed perspectief op complexe sociale problemen (Raymaekers & Van Riel, 2014) en staan dicht bij de leefwereld van de dak- en thuislozen zelf (Stam, 2013) waardoor ze vaak als eerste de mogelijke impact van bepaalde maatregelen kunnen capteren en onmisbaar zijn als de 'ogen en oren van het netwerk' op straat om dergelijke signalen ook terug te koppelen naar de discussies die binnen het netwerk worden gevoerd. Toch verhouden deze laagdrempelige actoren zich op een vaak complexe manier tot het professionele hulpverleningscircuit (la Cour & Hojlund, 2008; Villadsen, 2009) en is er ook het gevaar dat bepaalde verantwoordelijkheden en taken met betrekking tot moeilijk bereikbare doelgroepen aan hen worden 'uitbesteed' (Maeseele, 2012).

Op het niveau van de context waarbinnen netwerken bestaan, is het belangrijk te wijzen op de rol die de Vlaamse overheid vervult ten aanzien van deze bottom-up netwerken en de wijze waarop en de mate waarin ze de actoren die erin betrokken zijn al dan niet aanstuurt via haar regelgeving. Dit betekent dat de Vlaamse overheid er enerzijds kan voor kiezen om zich grotendeels afzijdig te houden en de nodige (experimenteer)ruimte te geven (of laten) voor de betrokken actoren om via netwerkvorming bepaalde hiaten of obstakels inzake maatschappelijke dienstverlening aan burgers weg te werken, of dat ze anderzijds een veeleer actieve rol kan gaan spelen ten aanzien van deze netwerken door signalen te capteren, de netwerken ook te ondersteunen en zelfs deels aan te sturen.

Een laatste onderdeel dat in het zevende hoofdstuk aan bod komt, betreft het interdisciplinaire karakter van voorliggend doctoraatsonderzoek. Dit impliceert een terugblik op de initiële probleemstelling en de bijhorende onderzoeksvragen die een centrale positie bekleden binnen de studie van sociaal werkpraktijken en die werden benaderd via conceptuele en theoretische kaders uit de bestuurskunde. Het interdisciplinaire karakter van dit onderzoek vloeide immers niet enkel voort uit de

'tussenpositie' die ik als onderzoeker innam binnen de vakgroep Sociaal Werk en Sociale Pedagogiek door mijn origine als onderzoeker in de bestuurskunde, maar evenzeer uit het feit dat de vragen met betrekking tot de voedingsbodem voor bottom-up netwerken en de effectiviteit van dergelijke netwerken ook in de bestuurskundige literatuur uiterst relevante thema's zijn.

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% Data Storage Fact Sheet

% Name/identifier study: Local social policy and
accessible social service delivery. A study of the
relationship between local governments and private
nonprofit organisations

% Author: Joris De Corte
% Date: 02/06/2015


1. Contact details
==========================================================
=

1a. Main researcher
----------------------------------------------------------
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1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)
----------------------------------------------------------
-
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If a response is not received when using the above contact
details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or
contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and
Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent,
Belgium.


2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet
applies
==========================================================
=
* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are
reported:

De Corte, J. (2015) Local social policy and accessible
social service delivery. A study of the relationship
between local governments and private non-profit
organizations (Doctoral dissertation)
```

De Corte, J., & Verschuere, B. (2014). A typology for the relationship between local governments and NPOs in welfare state regimes: The Belgian case revisited. *Public Management Review*, 16 (7): 1011–1029.

Verschuere, B., & De Corte, J. (2014). The impact of public resource dependence on the autonomy of NPOs in their strategic decision-making. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43 (2), 293-313.

De Corte, J., Verschuere, B., & Bouverne-De Bie, M. (2015). Bottom-up networks for welfare provision to citizens: Getting a grip on processes of social exclusion by evaluating network effectiveness. *Social Policy and Administration* (submitted).

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De Corte, J., Verschuere, B., Roets, G., & Bouverne-De Bie, M. (2015). Uncovering the double-edged sword of inter-organisational networks of welfare services: Tackling wicked issues in social work. *British Journal of Social Work* (submitted).

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?:

All.

3. Information about the files that have been stored

3a. Raw data

Interview data:

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher?[x]YES/[ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

```
* On which platform are the raw data stored?
 - [x] researcher PC
 - [ ] research group file server
 - [ ] other (specify):

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without
intervention of another person)?
 - [x] main researcher
 - [ ] responsible ZAP
 - [ ] all members of the research group
 - [ ] all members of UGent
 - [ ] other (specify): ...

Archive data:

* Have the raw data been stored by the main
researcher?[x]YES/[ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
 - [x] researcher PC
 - [ ] research group file server
 - [ ] other (specify):

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without
intervention of another person)?
 - [x] main researcher
 - [ ] responsible ZAP
 - [ ] all members of the research group
 - [ ] all members of UGent
 - [ ] other (specify):



3b. Other files
------------------------------------------------------------
-
Interview data:

* Which other files have been stored?
 - [x] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to
reported results. Specify: Transcriptions interviews.
 - [ ] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: ...
 - [x] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: Tables &
summaries based on the data provided by the researcher.
 - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed
consent
 - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
```

- [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
- [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
- [x] individual PC
- [ ] research group file server
- [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
- [x] main researcher
- [ ] responsible ZAP
- [ ] all members of the research group
- [ ] all members of UGent
- [ ] other (specify):

Archive data:

* Which other files have been stored?
- [x] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: Notes of the archival material.
- [ ] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: ...
- [x] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: Tables & summaries based on the data provided by the researcher.
- [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
- [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
- [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
- [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
- [x] individual PC
- [ ] research group file server
- [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
- [x] main researcher
- [ ] responsible ZAP
- [ ] all members of the research group
- [ ] all members of UGent
- [ ] other (specify): Server administrator of the departement.

```
4. Reproduction
============================================================
=
* Have the results been reproduced independently?: [ ] YES
/ [x] NO

* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):
 - name:
 - address:
 - affiliation:
 - e-mail:


v0.2
```