The effectiveness of service delivering networks: towards a key role of local government?

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Problem statement

The increasing complexity and ‘wicked’ character of many social problems have urged local governments to establish networks in which they involve civil society organizations and private welfare suppliers to organize social service delivery for citizens (Rittel and Webber 1973; O’Toole 1997; Marcussen and Torfing 2003). As multiple actors pool their resources and expertise, networks are expected to enhance citizens’ access to social welfare provision and to provide more qualitative and tailor-made services (Agranoff and McGuire 2007; Bozini and Enjolras 2012). This tendency towards decentralization of state functions has, however, changed the role of local governments as they cannot longer rely on traditional mechanisms of command and control to coordinate interactions within these networks. (O’Toole 1997; Stoker 1998; De Vita 1999; Pierre 2000; Klijn 2008). Still, as the presence of a central agency has been often related to the effectiveness of the network, the issue of network coordination remains highly relevant (Provan and Milward 1995; Provan and Sebastian 1998; Conrad 2003).
This article focuses on such governance networks between local governments and private welfare organizations in one metropolitan area (Kortrijk) in Belgium. These networks were created to provide social services to a hard-reach group of homelessness people in this region. We hereby distill three major objectives. First, as networks risk of becoming a metaphor for all kinds of cooperation between the public and private sector, we focus on the characteristics that separate them from hierarchies and markets (Powell 1990; Borzel 1998; Frederickson 2005). This results in the first research (RQ1): *How do networks between local government and private welfare actors look like?* Next, we ascertain that the issue of coordination has become increasingly complex within such networks (Agranoff and McGuire 2001). Hence, our second research question (RQ2) becomes: *How are networks between local government and private welfare actors managed by a central agency?* Finally, this article raises the important, but often neglected, question of network effectiveness (Provan and Milward 2001; Turrini, Cristofoli et.al. 2009). Therefore, we analyze effectiveness at two levels: the effectiveness for the individual organizations that comprise the network and the effectiveness of the network as a whole (Kenis and Provan 2009). This results in the following research questions: *How effective are actors within networks in creating added value for their individual organization through participation to the network?* (RQ3a) and *How effective are the actors within networks in finding mutual adjustment to provide qualitative services to citizens?* (RQ3b).

**Conceptual framework**

**Network structure**

As networks are assumed to unlock competencies of the actors involved, they are increasingly recognized as worthy alternatives to traditional bureaucracy or market-based mechanisms for organizing social service delivery to citizens (McGuire 2006; Gazley and Brudney 2007; Andrews and Entwistle 2010; Koliba et.al. 2012). Within public administration literature, networks are primarily defined as a group of public and private actors that have a common stake in a task or issue and voluntary engage in a process of resource exchange (Wood and Gray 1991; Huxham and Vangen 1996; Keast, Mandell, et.al. 2004). Network members remain operationally autonomous, but recognize that they are, to some extent, also dependent upon resources controlled by other organizations to solve complex problems (O’Toole 1997; Keast, Mandell, et.al. 2004; Entwistle and Martin 2005). Furthermore, these resources (e.g. financial means, production capacity, competence, legitimacy or information and knowledge) will not necessarily be distributed equally among actors (Saidel 1991; Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). Still, it is assumed that network members will not use their power unilaterally but rather initiate a process of bargaining and negotiation (Rhodes 1997; Keast, Mandell, et.al. 2004). This is because networks entail ethical principles of coordination that are based
on reciprocity and trust. By trusting each other, the partners agree to forego the right to pursue their own interests at the expense of others (Powell 1990). The presence of a central agency within the network, acting as coordinator and facilitator, hereby is of great importance to enhance network effectiveness (Provan and Milward 1995; Provan and Sebastian 1998; Conrad 2003; Provan and Kenis 2007).

**Network management**

As the allocation of managerial resources in networks varies across time and space, it remains difficult to determine (and measure) the tasks of a central agency within the network (McGuire 2002). Keast (2003) argues that central agencies primarily operate at an operational level by providing the mechanisms by which networks function on a day to day basis. Furthermore, central agencies perform a more strategic role by establishing a shared perspective for the network as a whole (Rethemeyer and Hatmaker 2007). In order to make all network members responsible for collective outcomes, the central agency might also act as a co-producer by giving members a stake in setting the goals and direction of the network (Span, Luijckx, et. al. 2012). In this article, we specifically rely on a categorization of network management by Robert Agranoff and Michael McGuire (2001): activation, framing, mobilizing and synthesizing. *Activation* refers to a set of behaviors employed for identifying and incorporating the right organizations or persons to the network due to the scarce or valuable resources they possess (Lipnack and Stamps 1994; McGuire 2006). The role of *framing* the interaction between network participants is primarily related to the development of a set of relatively simple but stable operating rules, facilitating agreement on participants’ roles and the creation of an identity and culture for the network (Mandell 1990; Kickert and Koppenjan 1997). Hence, a central agency can frame the network context by introducing new ideas, offer suggestions for looking differently at a problem and altering the perceptions of participants (Lipnack and Stamps 1994; O’Toole 1997). *Mobilizing* behavior is intended to induce commitment and to build support from those who are (in)directly involved (Mandell 1990; Kickert and Koppenjan 1997; Innes and Booher 1999). Hence, a central agency must be able to sell an idea to potential network participants to secure this commitment and support for the network (Gray 1989; Mandell 1990). By *synthesizing* the central agency creates the environment for favorable, productive interaction among network participants. Hence, the network manager must nurture inner stability by strengthen bridges between members and by promoting information exchange to minimize or prevent blockages or uncertainty (Kickert and Koppenjan 1997; O’Toole 1997; Innes and Booher 1999; Turrini, Christofoli et.al.2009).
Network effectiveness

Network effectiveness has often been poorly conceptualized due to the fact that multiple stakeholders might lay a claim to the organizations that comprise the network (McGuire and Agranoff 2007; Kenis and Provan 2009). Hence, the key question becomes ‘effectiveness for whom’: for the entire community of citizens, for the network as a whole or for individual network members (Provan and Milward 2001; Provan and Kenis 2007). In this article, network effectiveness is assessed at the organizational level and the level of a network as a whole. Moreover, we argue that this analysis will equally allow us to make some conclusions about the effectivity of networks at the community level.

First, at the organizational level, we acknowledge that individual network members will, at least partly, be motivated by self-interest. Hence, their objective is to ensure growth or survival of their own agency (Provan and Milward 2001). Furthermore, we agree that any decision on the criteria to evaluate organizational motivations to step into a network is in fact a normative one (Kenis and Provan 2009). In this article, we therefore rely on four general clusters of criteria: reduction of costs, gaining legitimacy from key stakeholders in their environment, resource acquisition and improving client outcomes (Provan and Milward 2001). Secondly, at the level of a network as a whole, we focus on the outcomes for citizens or clients that could have only been achieved through collective efforts and mutual adjustment between multiple actors that were separately providing services (Alter and Hage 1993; Provan and Milward 2001; Provan, Fish et.al. 2007; Kenis and Provan 2009). This view builds on logic from game theory in which it is argued that cooperation between human service organizations will produce outcomes that are more favorable than when the parties compete (Axelrod 1984). In order to evaluate the quality of network outcomes for citizens, we rely on five criteria that help us to determine the nature of this process of social service delivery: availability, accessibility, affordability, usefulness and comprehensibility (Roose and De Bie 2003). Availability refers to the existence of a supply and to the fact that social services can be called upon for matters that do not relate directly to the assessed problem. Accessibility refers to the (lack of) thresholds when care is needed, for instance an inadequate knowledge of the supply. Affordability relates to financial and other (e.g. in terms of 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, the skills and the language of the client? Comprehensibility, finally, relates to the extent to which citizens are aware of the reasons for intervention and the way in which the problem should be approached.
Method & outline of the case study

In order to address this article’s descriptive research questions (so-called ‘how’ questions) we adopt a qualitative research strategy. We argue that a case-study approach is well-suited to learn about the complex nature of networks between local government and private welfare suppliers for the purpose of social service delivery. After all, these networks could be considered as contemporary social phenomena that occur within a real-life context over which the research has little control (Yin 2011). We conduct a single case study in one big city (Kortrijk) in Flanders, the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. We argue that the case of Kortrijk could be considered as a representative example for other metropolitan areas in which local government has to deal with supra-local problems associated with poverty. According to FEANTSA, the European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless, growing attention has been paid across Europe to the urgent challenges related to homelessness (FEANTSA 2009). Therefore, we focus on the two most important networks that are established in Kortrijk to help out citizens confronted with a situation of homelessness.

The Crisis Consultation Network (CCN) was created in 2008 and consists of local government and nine private welfare organizations that voluntarily committed themselves to find collective solutions for complex situations related to homelessness in Kortrijk. In general, the CCN treats a limited number of 12 individual cases each year. The CCN could be activated when one of the members is confronted with a citizen for whom it has no bed available for the upcoming night. Given the acute character of these crisis situations, local government has put two crisis beds at the disposal of the CCN to bridge these first days. Within the following 48 hours, a network meeting is then organized in which all members aim at developing a customized solution for the citizen’s particular problem. As a result, one network member is assigned to provide accommodation and develop a care program within its own facilities, while another member will additionally provide support to this person during treatment by performing a more ‘neutral’ role as counselor.

The idea for a night shelter arose from the mind of community workers that were increasingly confronted with a population of homeless people in Kortrijk and its surrounding areas during the years 2000. This was especially due to the fact that a relatively large group of homeless did not (longer) obtain access to the regular housing market or professional care programs of local government and private welfare organizations. Since 2008, the night shelter is organized every year during winter. In concrete, people who (temporally) live on the streets could sign up anonymously in the evening and enjoy a bed, a bath and a breakfast. At 9’o clock the next morning, people are expected to leave again.

For an overview of all members of these networks, we refer to the table in annex.
In order to answer our initial research questions, we primarily conducted an extensive review of international literature, which has been outlined in the previous chapter, on the issues of network structure, network coordination and network effectiveness. This must help us to ensure the construct validity of this study and provide fertile ground for linking our research questions to the data to be gathered. During this study we relied on multiple sources of evidence, which enables us to develop converging lines of inquiry. In concrete, we conducted a content analysis on policy documents, meeting reports, strategic notes, evaluation reports, etc. concerning the two networks under study. In order to further enrich and test our data, we also conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with, at least, one representative (director) of each key member within these networks.

About the structure and functioning of these networks

The two networks under study have a different size. The functioning and coordination of the night shelter could be largely considered as a joint responsibility of three organizations: local government and two private welfare organizations. On the contrary, the CCN consists of a fixed group of ten members. Moreover, other organizations might be invited to attend a CNN meeting as a guest member if they possess expertise to solve a particular case. Hence, this makes the issue of network coordination more urgent. As a result, the CCN has been managed by one private welfare organization (the Regional Crisis Center) acting as the central agency.

The common aim to create a network is situated in past experiences of key members as they simultaneously felt that working independently did not suffice to solve some of the highly complex cases related to homelessness they are confronted with. This has been the case in both networks under study. Still, despite the importance of such a shared analysis and exploration of opportunities for enhanced cooperation, it takes more to establish a network.

Therefore, we have to analyze the process of resource exchange between these organizations in order to collectively deal with these complex issues. Within the CCN, members essentially agree to share information about the citizen whose case is being treated. The amount of information they possess, will vary strongly. These resource imbalances are primarily related to the fact whether an organization has specific expertise to solve a particular case or whether it has a (long) history of dealing with this person’s situation in the past. Furthermore, as the CCN treats approximately twelve cases each year, all ten key members are actively involved in the follow-up of at least one case every year. This implies that each member is willing to invest some of its organizational expertise and production capacity to take on additional responsibility (e.g. in providing accommodation, developing a care program, acting as a counselor) for a person they might have (or would have) not treated
otherwise. Within the context of the night shelter, the three key members primarily invest production capacity on behalf of the network. This implies that resources are made available to sustain the day-to-day functioning (e.g. in doing the laundry, making some repairs to the building, recruiting volunteers, etc.) of the night shelter. Still, there is only one key member (local government) that does invest a relatively large amount of money to sustain the night shelter.

Within both networks, the interaction between network members is generally characterized by a form of openness and directness. Interviewees described openness as the willingness to think ‘out of the box’, to listen to each other to challenge the way they are used to work. Still, it has been equally argued that openness would not function without a form of directness. Only by speaking out frankly and sharing every information, opinion or frustration, the network is able to advance. Moreover, a form of directness in the communication ensures that all members will actually reveal the engagements they are willing to make in a particular situation.

This kind of open and direct communication is also related to the presence of a basic level of trust between members. In a general way, interviewees described trust as the assumption that other organizations would carry out what they promised to do. Or, in the words of a CCN member:

“Partners are expected to be honest, reliable and of good will”.

Positive experiences in working together are of crucial importance for further inducing deepened interaction between actors. This is highlighted by the following quote:

“In the beginning we all had to take some calculated risks in order to start our cooperation. You can debate for a long time, but at one point, you just have to jump”.

Still, it has been equally acknowledged that trust must get time to grow and develop. This is not only related to good interpersonal relationships between key members within networks, but also to the fact members must learn how other organizations function. This is illustrated by a quotation of a director of private welfare organizations involved in the night shelter:

“Ten years ago, I would have definitely criticized the way other organizations dealt with homeless people. By cooperating more intensively, I have learnt to understand how other directors motivate the decisions they make”.

Network coordination

Whereas the coordination of the night shelter merely is a shared responsibility of a small core group of three members, the management of the CCN is far more complex. This is especially due to its
relatively large size combined with the diverse background of the members involved. This article will specifically focus on the activities performed by one private welfare organization, the Regional Crisis Center (RCC) that acted as central agency ever since the CCN was created. The RCC primarily gained legitimacy from other members due to its long-term experience in dealing with complex situations of homelessness in the area of Kortrijk. Over the years, the central role of the RCC was further strengthened due to its fairly neutral positioning within debates between members.

During the preparation phase, the RCC deliberately considered the CCN as a learning project with a fixed duration of eight months. This was especially important with respect to the processes of activation and mobilizing. In order to ‘sell’ the network to participants, it was expected that the prospect of a temporary and delineated commitment should incite them. Simultaneously, members were also asked to participate in ‘framing’ some operating rules and procedures for the network. This process enabled the RCC to remove uncertainty and reticence during this first phase. Hence, the RCC acted as a co-producer by giving all members a voice in setting the goals, procedures and operating rules for the network. After these first few months, the CCN was positively evaluated and members expressed a willingness to extend their commitments. Still, despite the fact that no single member has left the network until today, the commitment of members (e.g. to regularly attend network meetings or take on responsibility for a citizen’s situation) has fluctuated over the years. This is due to a combination of a high case load within individual organizations and the voluntary membership of the CCN. This implies that the central agency continues to invest resources in activating and mobilizing members. The following quotation of the coordinator of the RCC sheds a light on this ongoing process:

“Although psychiatric facilities active in Kortrijk were strongly invited to participate to the initial learning project, they firmly refused to make any commitment. Hence, we started without them. Still, as we expected, the first evaluation report of the CCN showed that more than half of the cases treated, were clearly linked to a psychiatric disorder. In the end, this gave us the necessary ‘proof’ to convince them to participate when the second phase of the project was launched”.

As outlined before, the CCN consists of a fixed core group of ten members. Still, the RCC might take the initiative to invite other organizations as a guest member. This is related to the task of activation and is especially apparent when the key group lacks crucial information or expertise while treating a case within the CCN. The following quote of the director of the RCC reveals the importance of framing when new members join:

“In the past, I was not always aware of the fact that guest members could feel quite intimidated by the direct way regular members addressed each other. Hence, by trial and error, I have learnt to brief
new members in advance about how we communicate. This takes away some of their ‘exam stress’ and enhances their willingness to join the network”.

During CCN meetings, the RCC has an important task in synthesizing as this facilitates interaction between the partners at the table. Interviewees consider the RCC as a sufficiently neutral as it displays an open mind and gives proof of a pragmatic approach in removing blockages. This is highlighted by a quote of a CCN member:

“When debates get heated, I truly believe that it is far more effective to introduce a touch of humor than referring to some abstract overall goal for the network”.

As CCN meetings are held during lunch breaks, members do only have a limited amount of time to find adjustment. Hence, the preparation of a meeting is of crucial importance. This implies that the RCC must synthesize on behalf of the network, by developing and pre-testing a set of potential scenario’s to solve the citizen’s situation treated by the network.

Network effectivity

At the organizational level

As outlined before, we assessed network effectiveness by analyzing different categories of motivations of individual network members (Provan and Milward 2001). With regard to the night shelter, members are primarily driven by the objective of improving outcomes for citizens. All key members are confronted with a hard-to-reach group of homeless people they could (or would) not give access to their respective care programs and facilities. Hence, they collectively decided to invest some of their resources to create an additional instrument (night shelter) to provide some basic material services (bed, bad, bread) to this particular group.

Within the case of the CCN these organizational benefits are related to improving outcomes for citizens on the one hand and reducing organizational costs on the other. In essence, the CCN could be considered as an instrument to ‘transfer’ a citizen’s case to the network member that has most expertise to solve a particular situation. Hence, it is expected that citizens have greater opportunities for receiving the qualitative services they actually need. Next, the organization that signaled a case, for which it could (or would) not provide a durable solution itself, might reduce its own costs in the short term as it is no (longer) required to invest time and resources to it. Still, in the long term, this equally implies that every CCN member commits itself to take on responsibility for citizens that are brought up to the CCN by other members as well. Put differently, all CCN members could be seen as both producers for and users of the network.
At the network level

Although local government and private welfare organizations might individually provide excellent services to homeless people in Kortrijk, there is a growing recognition that a group of citizens, and especially those combining a situation of homelessness with addiction, burden of debt or psychiatric dysfunction, do not benefit yet from the social services they are entitled to. Hence, as collective action (e.g. night shelter or CCN) is necessitated to provide qualitative services to this particular group of citizens, the question of effectiveness must be also assessed at the level of the network as a whole.

As the night shelter does not provide any specialized care (e.g. for treating psychiatric dysfunction, reducing debts, giving medical assistance to addicted people or teaching skills to live independently again) the usefulness is especially related to an ability to provide a safe and warm place in which homeless people can come to rest for a while. Furthermore, those using the night shelter do not face any obligation to step into a predefined care program, unless they specifically ask for it themselves during their stay. Concerning the criterion of availability, it could be argued that the night shelter is open to everyone, regardless of age, gender, family situation (e.g. couples, persons accompanied by children), nationality, residence status (e.g. asylum seekers) or problem (e.g. addiction, psychiatric dysfunction). Still, there are four situations in which access to the night shelter is not fully guaranteed. Firstly, there is a problem of inadequate capacity if more people show up than beds are available. As a result, a system of lottery was introduced to assign beds. During the last year, this system had to be used in one out of four nights, implying that a total of 87 individuals were temporally denied access to the night shelter over this period. Secondly, citizens might not have access if they are (temporarily) suspended due to unreasonable behavior (e.g. aggression, breaking the house rules) during a previous stay at the night shelter. Thirdly, the night shelter is not continuously available but only for a period of four months during winter (from mid-November until mid-March). Fourthly, it has been decided that every person might only spend five nights a week in the night shelter. This restriction is justified by referring to the necessity that homeless people maintain their survival strategies and to avoid that the night shelter becomes a permanent hammock in which they could nestle without being obliged to regain control over their own situation. In order to enhance the accessibility, network members are making active efforts to make the night shelter more widely known to those citizens that could benefit from it. On the one hand, local government and private welfare organizations refer some of their existing clients, for which they could (or would) provide no (longer) services themselves, to the night shelter. On the other hand, network members also try to reach citizens that have not yet undertaken the step to regular care facilities. In that respect, the role of community workers in approaching homeless people (e.g. those living on the
street or in squats) is of crucial importance. In terms of affordability, citizens that make use of the night shelter do not have to pay a financial contribution, nor do they have to give up their privacy as their anonymity is respected. Comprehensibility is ensured due to the participation of citizens, both formally and informally, in setting working procedures and a code of conduct (e.g. defining hour of entry, etc.) for the night shelter.

With regard to the affordability of the CCN, we might argue that, although citizens do not have to pay any financial contribution to be served by the network, there still are some drawbacks related to privacy. This is especially due to the fact that the RCC, as being the central actor, must acquire all information available (e.g. past history within care facilities, addiction problems, personality characteristics, etc.) on this person’s situation. Even though this is a necessary step within the functioning of the CCN (e.g. in order to obtain a full picture of this person’s situation), it also poses challenges to organizations that have dealt with this person in the past and are now asked to share this sometimes confidential information with others. The functioning of the CCN becomes comprehensible for citizens as they are regularly involved. Before a CCN meeting is organized, an interview is conducted with each person whose case is being treated in order to unravel their particular needs and views on the situation. Although the citizen is not present during a CCN meeting, he or she is extensively briefed afterwards. Furthermore, every citizen must first agree that a CCN meeting is organized to deal with his or her situation and might afterwards also refuse the solution that is suggested by the network. Concerning the availability of the services provided by the CCN, we must take into account that the network could be only activated by local government or one of the private welfare organizations that form the core group. In other words, citizens do not have direct or immediate access to the CCN themselves. Furthermore, due to fact that engagements on behalf of the network are voluntary and cause additional work for the organizations involved, the CCN only treats a fixed number of 12 cases each year. This implies that some complex cases related to homelessness, which could in theory be considered by the CCN, will (or could) not be treated. The issue of accessibility is of less relevance as the CCN is not directly accessible for individual citizens. Finally, the CCN could be well considered as an instrument to provide a citizen with access to the ‘right’ services he or she might need. This is related to the aspect of usefulness. As outlined before, this is also due to regular participation of the citizen (e.g. in the preparation of a CCN meeting) in order to obtain a clear view on his or her needs. By doing so, the network members, which all have different expertise, are able to develop a more tailor-made solution. Still, this does not imply that every case has been treated with success. Ever since the CCN was created in 2008, there have been approximately five cases in which no durable solution has been found.
Conclusions

Starting from current debates on decentralization of state functions, this article focused on networks between local government and private welfare organizations with the aim of providing qualitative services and enhancing citizens’ access to social welfare provision. We conducted a case study of two networks that were established in one metropolitan area in Belgium (Kortrijk) to deal with complex problems associated with homelessness.

In the first chapters we highlighted some differences and similarities between both networks concerning their size and composition, the extent to which interactions are characterized by trust and the resources that are exchanged. Next, we analyzed the issue of network coordination. We found that a central agency gains legitimacy from members by maintaining a neutral position in debates and by developing sufficient expertise on the network’s core business. Furthermore, it was shown that mobilizing and activation could be best considered as ongoing tasks. When framing the network, the central agency primarily acted as a co-producer by giving all members a voice in setting the operating rules and procedures of the network. Synthesizing was related to the removal of blockages between members. This task was performed during formal meetings and, perhaps more importantly, also through regular informal contacts when preparing these network meetings.

In a final chapter we analyzed different dimensions of network effectiveness. At the organizational level, it was highlighted that network members were primarily motivated by improving outcomes for citizens that could (or would) not be served by local government or private welfare suppliers. Furthermore, although participation to networks (such as the CCN) might reduce organizational costs in the short term, all members are producers for the network as well by taking up additional responsibilities for non-clients as well.

At the level of the network as a whole, we relied on a set of criteria to describe how network actors succeeded in jointly producing qualitative services to those citizens that were not served by local government or individual welfare organizations acting independently. Nevertheless, it was shown that both the night shelter and CCN equally limited some citizens’ access to social service delivery by imposing criteria and creating new thresholds themselves. As a result, we might state that local government and private welfare organizations were still not able to develop durable solutions, neither individually nor collectively, for a small ‘rest group’ of homeless people in Kortrijk. This finding raises, however, questions about the effectiveness of these networks at the community level as well. This is especially apparent within the context of the Belgian welfare state in which the principle of equality before the law has a prominent position. In concrete, ever since 1976, every Belgian citizen has been granted by law with a right to have access to the social services he or she might
need. In recent years, the creation of networks at the local level has been considered necessary to ensure such legal protection. Still, as outlined in this article, the objective to guarantee equality before the law proved to be difficult in practice. Hence, it is of high importance that local government and private welfare organizations, as being network members, are equally willing to question the criteria through which they maintain control over access of citizens to their own care programs and facilities. In essence, the basic tension these organizations will be confronted with is the one between the amount of (public) resources they are willing to invest in solving complex problems of citizens on the one hand and the importance of individual responsibility of citizens to (re)gain control over their situation on the other. Moreover, we hereby expect differences to occur between the two networks under study. This is related to the way in which both networks are organized. Whereas the functioning of the CCN is based on a search for solutions within regular care programs and facilities of all network members, the night shelter must be rather considered as an additional initiative that is unrelated to the functioning of the network members themselves. This implies that the creation of a night shelter might be seen as a necessary but ‘safe’ investment through which welfare suppliers might release working pressure of their own organizations. Hence, instead of critically revising who obtains access to their own facilities and who not, organizations can continue to refer citizens they cannot (or would not) treat themselves to the night shelter.

The final remark is about the role of local government within the night shelter and the CCN. In both cases it could be well considered as an important actor, but definitely not as the sole agency that performs a central role in steering the network. Still, in the typical context of public-private networks for social welfare provision, governments (and not private welfare actors) could be ultimately held accountable for the satisfactory delivery of public goods and services to citizens (McGuire 2002). We argue that this is also the case with regard to the fulfillment of a right to social welfare to all citizens. Hence, as local government does not perform the central role within networks that aim at realizing this right to social welfare, the effectivity of these networks at the community level could be hampered as well.
### Annex – Composition of networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Name of organization</th>
<th>Short description of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRISIS</td>
<td>Department of Community Work of local government</td>
<td>Does active efforts to approach vulnerable persons or families within the environment (house, street, squat, etc.) they live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSULTATION</td>
<td>Center for General Welfare ‘Pyramid’</td>
<td>Private welfare organization providing a shelter in which citizens who are (temporally) homeless can stay for a couple of months while following a care program aiming at reinforcing them to live independently again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NETWORK</td>
<td>Center for General Welfare ‘Stimulans’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Crisis Center (RCC)</td>
<td>Private welfare organization providing three crisis beds at the disposal of services and organizations (e.g. police, public transport, welfare organizations, etc.) that are confronted with a person that has no roof above its head the upcoming night. The RCC has a call center that is only activated outside office hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Housing Department of local government</td>
<td>Counsels people who risk of becoming homeless in the near future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AZ Groeninge</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Bolster</td>
<td>Private welfare organization counseling people with a mental disability</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heilige Familie</td>
<td>Private welfare organization providing a shelter and counseling for people with a psychiatric dysfunction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kompas</td>
<td>Private welfare organization providing a shelter and counseling for people with problems related to addiction (drugs, alcohol, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ubuntu</td>
<td>Private welfare organization providing a shelter and counseling for handicapped persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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