The Governance of Local Networks in the Fight against Child Poverty

A qualitative and comparative analysis of lead organization networks

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For mama, papa, Liesbeth and Sofie.

Abstract

This dissertation concerns the governance of lead organization networks among public-nonprofit service organizations. Using qualitative research, the aim of this thesis is to gain insight into the governance structures and the coordination that unfolds within these networks. I interviewed network participants, representatives of the lead organizations and network coordinators in twelve local networks in Flanders and Brussels, Belgium. All of these networks were installed in the fight against child poverty and are characterized by a lead organization-type of governance structure.

My research scope is fourfold. First, I zoom in on the governance structures that unfold in these networks. I discern different vertical layers of complexity that are important in pursuing a balance between efficiency and inclusiveness within networks of service providers. By gaining insight into these different levels (the leading organization, the coordinators, the steering committees and the workgroups), I provide insights regarding the relation between vertical complexity and the efficiency and inclusiveness in the decision-making process.

Second, by unravelling these vertical structures, the important role of the coordinator in these networks of service providers becomes apparent. With the purpose of getting insight into the way these coordinators fulfill their coordination task, I analyze the extent to which different governance roles (ranging from top-down to bottom-up) are able to enhance the process performance of networks of service organizations. I focus on three components to determine process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability within the network.

The third research scope of this dissertation zooms in on the establishment of a consensus within these networks. Based on in-depth research of three of the previously mentioned twelve networks, I gain insight into how different types of network coordinators (a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator) are able to build consensus on a set of network goals in close collaboration with the nonprofit network partners.

Finally, I analyze the coordination of one network that combines efforts of generalist and specialist frontline practitioners. This case-study elaborates on inter-professional collaborations and provides insights regarding the coordination of these types of collaborations. More precisely, I gain insight into how a coordinator can encourage, support and enhance the collaboration between these generalists and specialists using different coordination styles.

Besides these four research scopes, this dissertation formulates recommendations and insights that can be applied by both policy makers, network coordinators and frontline practitioners when it comes to the governance, organization and coordination of local networks of public-nonprofit service organizations.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift behandelt de governance van leidende organisatie netwerken, meer bepaald van lokale netwerken kinderarmoedebestrijding die verschillende dienstverleners verenigen. Door middel van interviews met netwerk participanten, vertegenwoordigers van de leidende organisatie en netwerkcoördinatoren van twaalf lokale netwerken in Vlaanderen en Brussel verschaf ik inzichten in de governance structuren en de coördinatiemechanismen die ontstaan in deze netwerken. Deze netwerken werden op het lokale niveau opgericht in de strijd tegen kinderarmoede en worden gekenmerkt door een leidende organisatie governance-structuur.

De focus van dit proefschrift ontvouwt zich over vier deeldomeinen. Allereerst zoom ik in op de governance structuren die ontstaan in deze netwerken. Ik onderscheid verschillende lagen van verticale complexiteit die bijdragen tot een goede balans tussen de efficiëntie en de inclusie in deze netwerken. Door meer inzicht te verwerven in deze verschillende lagen (de leidende organisatie, de coördinatoren, de stuurgroepen en de werkgroepen), verschaf ik inzichten wat betreft de relatie tussen verticale complexiteit en de efficiëntie en inclusie die het beslissingsproces in deze netwerken kenmerkt.

Door deze verticale structuur te onderzoeken en deze beter te belichten, wordt de belangrijke rol van de coördinator in deze netwerken duidelijk. Een tweede deeldomein zoomt in op de manier waarop netwerkcoördinatoren deze coördinatietaak vervullen en onderzoekt hoe verschillende coördinatierollen (die gaan van top-down tot bottom-up) kunnen bijdragen tot de performantie van het netwerkproces. Ik verwijs hiervoor naar drie componenten die proces-performantie bepalen, nl. legitimiteit, de mate van consensus en de verantwoording die afgelegd dient te worden in het netwerk.

Een derde domein van dit proefschrift verschaft meer inzicht in de zoektocht naar een consensus in deze netwerken. Op basis van interviews in drie van de hierboven genoemde twaalf netwerken onderzoek ik hoe drie verschillende types van netwerkcoördinatoren (een commissioner, een co-producer en een facilitator) kunnen toewerken naar een consensus wat betreft de netwerkdoelstellingen en dit in samenwerking met de verschillende netwerkpartners.

Een vierde en laatste deeldomein zoomt in op een netwerk van generalistische en specialistische professionals. Deze case study onderzoekt enerzijds de interprofessionele samenwerking tussen deze hulpverleners en anderzijds de coördinatiestijl die zich doorheen deze samenwerking ontwikkelt. Hierdoor verschaf ik inzichten in hoe een netwerkcoördinator de samenwerking tussen deze generalistische en specialistische professionals kan aanmoedigen, ondersteunen en verbeteren door gebruik te maken van verschillende coördinatietypes.

Naast deze vier deeldomeinen reik ik enkele aanbevelingen en inzichten aan inzake governance, organisatie, coördinatie en samenwerking die door beleidsmakers, netwerkcoördinatoren en hulpverleners toegepast kunnen worden in de dagelijkse netwerkpraktijk.

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"Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt."

William Shakespeare

Introduction

Introduction

Poverty is and remains a persistent social phenomenon in our current society. In the last decade, policy makers and researchers have emphasized that local networks are indispensable in the fight against poverty. In this thesis I gain more insight into the governance of lead organization networks among service organizations. These networks are often installed to provide services to vulnerable target groups confronted with wicked issues (Rittel & Webber, 1973) and combine the expertise of a very diverse set of organizations and professionals. Despite the network euphoria of policy makers and practitioners, the governance of these collaborations should not be taken for granted as these networks have the task to unite service providers with different backgrounds, different knowledge bases and different ethical and normative views (Blom, 2004; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013). In order for these networks to be successful, they have to achieve a level of network integration among a diverse set of service organizations (Rosenheck et al, 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995; 2001, Milward & Provan, 2006: Provan & Kenis, 2008). Networks need the expertise of different service agencies to deal with the complex problems of their vulnerable target groups, but at the same time, integration among this differentiated set of network actors is crucial to fulfill a set of collective network goals. This makes network governance indispensable (Edelenbos et al., 2013; Klijn et al., 2010; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Raeymaeckers & Kenis, 2016).

The main aim of this thesis is to provide insight into the governance structures and the coordination roles that can be adopted within lead organization governed networks to deal with the tension between integration and differentiation. I conduct qualitative research in networks that are established to provide services to families with children in poverty. More specifically, my thesis zooms in on local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty in Flanders and Brussels. These networks - funded by the Flemish and the Federal government and established on the level of the local government - consist of public and nonprofit service organizations and are governed by one leading public agency. Four research aims stand central in this thesis:

1. The first goal of this research is to get more insight into how local lead organization-governed networks are structured. I therefore zoom in on the governance structures that arise in these networks and I look into how various vertical layers of complexity are installed to deal with the tension between efficiency and inclusiveness that exists in these local networks.
2. The second goal of this thesis is to investigate the extent to which network coordinators who adopt different governance roles are able to enhance the process performance within these local networks. I use the framework of Span et al. (2012a) who make a distinction between a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator. To get more insight into the connection between process performance and these governance roles, I look into three components of process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability (Voets et al., 2008).
3. The third goal of my thesis is to gain insight into how network coordinators are able to establish consensus on the goals within a network. I analyze the extent to which different types of coordinators – again based on the framework of Span et al. (2012a) - are able to build consensus on a set of network goals in close collaboration with the nonprofit network partners.
4. My fourth and last research goal is to shed light on the link between the coordination of networks of generalist and specialist professionals and the abovementioned governance roles. I elaborate on these inter-professional collaborations between generalists and

specialists and I gain insight into how these collaborations can be encouraged, supported and enhanced through different coordination styles and mechanisms.

My research makes an important contribution to the scientific literature in three general ways. First, I contribute to studies that identify different governance roles that are adopted by coordinators in lead organization-governed networks. As comparative research on this topic is scarce (Isett, et al., 2011), I include network cases governed by network coordinators who adopt different governance roles. This allows me to draw conclusions on which governance role is most successful under which network circumstances.

Second, I build on the literature on public governance as well as social work to offer useful insights and conceptual tools to provide a better understanding on how networks of nonprofit service organizations should be governed. Empirical research on the governance of networks is scarce in the field of nonprofit governance and social work (Cairns & Harris, 2011; Cornforth et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2010, 2014; Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2012). Most social work research focuses on the collaboration among two organizations (Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2012) and scholars on nonprofit governance have mainly focused on governance of single organizations and consider the board as the main focus of analysis (Cornforth, 2012; Ostrower & Stone, 2006; Stone & Ostrower, 2007). My analysis adopts a network perspective by focusing on the governance of the whole network of nonprofit service organizations. Besides this, I also provide useful insights for the practice of social work by focusing on collaborations between generalist and specialist social work professionals.

Third, a multi-stakeholder approach allows us to provide a clear image of the perceptions that different stakeholders have regarding the governance of the network. As stakeholders can have very different needs and preferences, very different access to resources, and pursue different goals (Balser & McClusky, 2005), their expectations towards the role of the coordinator can be different. My study complements earlier studies by explicitly making a distinction between the perceptions of coordinators, leading organizations and network participants. This approach allows me to provide an in-depth analysis on how network governance can be more effectively established in everyday practice.

In what follows, I will first elaborate on how I approach poverty in this research, I will discuss the tendency to allocate an increasingly important role to the local government in the fight against (child) poverty and provide more insights regarding the concepts of networks and governance. I will also provide a short outline of this thesis and briefly zoom in on the used methodology.

Poverty: a matter of human dignity

The concept of poverty can be approached, measured and defined using a narrow or a broad scope (Lister, 2004). When referring to a narrow scope, poverty can be defined as the lack of financial resources, which is referred to as monetary poverty. In this respect, a person is at risk of poverty when its household income is below the 60% national median income threshold (Atkinson et al., 2004; EU Social Protection Committee, 2001). It is assumed that households that have an income under this threshold are exposed to a higher risk of living in poverty (EU Social Protection Committee, 2001). A somewhat broader scope than monetary poverty is used by researchers focusing on material deprivation. Following this approach poverty is defined as a situation in which people are unable to afford at least four out of the following nine items: (1) mortgage or rent payments, utility bills, (2) heating to keep the home adequately warm, (3) unexpected financial expenses, (4) a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day, (5) one week's holiday away from home or buy a (6) car, (7) washing machine, (8) color TV or (9) phone (Eurostat, 2017). A broader perspective approaches poverty as a multidimensional

phenomenon. Here, poverty is defined as a web of social exclusions on different life domains, referring to for example income, housing, labor market, education and exclusion form social services (Vranken, 2001). In this research I draw further on this broad approach on poverty. More specifically I use the definition developed by Raeymaeckers, Noël, Boost, Vermeiren, Coene and Van Dam (2017, p. 25). Here, poverty is defined as:

> *"a network of social exclusions that extends over several domains of individual and collective existence. It hinders people in poverty of living a life that is characterized by human dignity. This gap is generated in society and cannot be overcome individually."*

I emphasize that poverty should not be reduced to a lack of financial means or material deprivation, nor that it should be perceived as an individual culpability or responsibility. Poverty prevents people from leading a life that is characterized by human dignity on several life domains such as housing, education, health and culture, and it should be addressed as a structural societal problem.

I elaborate on two important aspects that stand central in this definition. First, poverty is approached as a multi-dimensional issue, which refers to the idea that poverty manifests itself on several life domains such as education, employment, housing, health care and leisure time and that the experiences of people in poverty should be taken into account. The complexity of poverty becomes clear when we underline that it is more than a lack of money, but that the concept refers to social exclusions with negative implications on a web of life domains such as for example one's social capital, housing situation, educational and career opportunities, cultural participation and other life domains.

Second, the definition of Raeymaeckers et al. (2017) introduces the concept of human dignity, and by doing so uses a rights-based approach to poverty, which means that a life in poverty is seen as a violation of human rights and that poverty can be approached as a social injustice (Lister, 2004). A statement from the General Assembly of the United Nations dating back to 1992 already described poverty as a "*violation of human dignity*" (UN, 1992). By adding this approach to the poverty discussion, we add another layer to the conceptualization of poverty. Nussbaum (2000), among other authors, reasons that in order for people to live a life that is characterized by human dignity, the difference between basic human needs and human dignity should be clear. While basic human needs refer to several universal characteristics such as hunger, thirst, the need for shelter and clothing, mobility, mortality, but also emotions and humour, imagination and reflection, the capacity to reason etc.; a rights-based approach on poverty based on the concept of human dignity goes beyond this set of basic human needs. In this respect, Dean (2015) substantiates between thin and thick needs. Thin needs refer to the "*things required in order for a person to obtain pleasure and avoid pain*", while thick needs refer to "*the things required in order for a person to flourish and to achieve a good life*" (Dean, 2014, p. 404). Both these thick and thin needs have to be fulfilled to ensure human wellbeing.

Drawing further on these insights, I conclude that a rights-based approach should underpin the present-day policy on poverty reduction on every policy level. Citizens dispose of several essential human rights "*just by virtue of being human*" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 98). Poverty policy should therefore aim for the realization of human rights, especially for vulnerable target groups, and provide the opportunity for everyone to lead a life that is characterized by human dignity.

Following the abovementioned insights and the emphasis on a multidimensional perspective on poverty, we consider poverty as a wicked problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973). This refers to the fact that the different components of poverty cannot be dealt with separately or in a serial manner. In order to deal with the complicated issues of this target group, literature emphasizes that networks have to be encouraged and formed between different organizations and services who all tend to work on these issues separately (Buck et al., 2011; Rosenheck et al., 1998). It is therefore strongly believed that networks between these different sectors and professionals are better able to provide an answer to these wicked issues. Before focusing on networks and network governance, we elaborate on the concept of child poverty.

Child poverty: the poverty of tomorrow

Although I use the term 'child poverty' throughout this thesis, Vandenbroeck and Van Lancker (2014) rightfully point out that there is no such thing as a poor child. Alternatively, child poverty refers to children who grow up in poor families. In 2016, 17,8% of children in Belgium aged 0 to 18 years old were at risk of poverty (Eurostat, 2016).

When we zoom in on the deprivation scale among children in Flanders (numbers provided by Kind & Gezin, 2018), we find that in 2017, 13,8% of children aged 0 to 3 years old lived in deprived families. This scale is based on six criteria: the monthly family income, the educational attainment and the employment status of the parents, the level of (pedagogical) stimulation towards the child and the housing and health situation. When a family scores weak on three or more criteria, the family and consequently the child are considered to be deprived. As already mentioned before, this deprivation has causes and implications on the level of education, housing, health, social participation and social capital and cannot be reduced to the issue of income deprivation of parents.

Two findings have to be stipulated here. First, this rate has continued to rise over the last fifteen years. In 2001, 6% of children between 0 and 3 years old who lived in Flanders, lived in deprived families. In 2009, this percentage had gone up to 8,2%. The fact that we are now at an alarmingly high rate of 13,8%, is partly due to the fact that awareness has continued to rise among social workers and nurses who register these data. Nevertheless, the fact that this percentage has more than doubled in fifteen years, also proves that poverty reduction policies are not effective.

Second, we find that there is a large disparity among the different provinces and municipalities in Flanders. Vlaams-Brabant, a province with a deprivation rate of 8,3%, differs greatly from the deprivation rate of Antwerpen, the province with the highest rate at 17,6%. When we zoom in on the differences between the Flemish municipalities, we find even greater local disparities. On the one hand, we see that there are municipalities with a deprivation rate lower than 0,5%, while the highest deprivation rate is at a staggering 38,6% (Kind & Gezin, 2018). Keeping these numbers in mind and being aware of the fact that these numbers represent today and tomorrow's poverty rates, it can come as no surprise that the attention of policy makers and politics has shifted from poverty in general to child poverty.

Fighting poverty locally

The abovementioned local differences, alongside the increasing political attention for child poverty, led to the tendency to attribute an increasingly important role to the local government in the fight against (child) poverty. This is in line with the observation of Martinielli et al. (2017) that European welfare states increasingly shift towards more vertical and horizontal 'division of labor'. On the one hand - referred to as vertical division of labor - local governments tend to receive more responsibilities when it comes to implementing social policies. The underlying idea is that the local government is (one of) the first level(s) to be challenged with the needs, demands, problems

and risks that their citizens are confronted or struggling with (Martinielli et al., 2017; Raeymaeckers et al., 2017). On the other hand, the horizontal division of labor refers to the fact that local governments increasingly collaborate with different actors of civil society, i.e. organizations and initiatives on the local level to fight poverty.

This vertical and horizontal division of labor also becomes clear in the Flemish context. For example, the Flemish decree on Local Social Policy considers the local government as the main coordinating actor in the local welfare landscape. More specifically, the local government oversees the coordination of local needs and supply in the social sector and is responsible for providing and creating services that are accessible and supportive for everyone. In other words, the local government is responsible for the detection of gaps and overlap in service provision. Together with the local service organizations, the local government is supposed to provide and offer well-functioning and accessible services to its citizens. This vertical and horizontal division of labor is also reflected in the resources that have been made available for local governments to fight child poverty over the last seven years. On the Flemish level, former Minister for Poverty Reduction Ingrid Lieten took the initiative to subsidize the formation of local networks that aim to reduce child poverty on a local level. From 2011 until 2014, several of these networks were subsidized for a period of one up to four years. The main goal of these networks was to advance the connections between different local organizations and to provide initiatives in the fight against child poverty. How these networks were to interpret and translate this goal into local action, was left for the local networks to decide. On the Federal level, former Secretary of State for Social Integration and Poverty Reduction Maggie De Block has financed the installation of local platforms that unite different initiatives and organizations in the (preventive) detection and fight against child poverty.

The shift towards more horizontal and vertical division of labor is observed in several other European countries (Kazepov, 2010; Martinielli et al., 2017). Chen and Graddy (2010, p. 405) find that the "*formation of interorganizational partnerships for delivery of publicly funded social services*" becomes increasingly popular (Kettl, 2006; Bingham & O'Leary, 2008; O'Leary & Bingham, 2009, O'Leary et al., 2006; Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Agranoff, 2007; all in Chen & Graddy, 2010). They go on to say that in these networks public funding agencies increasingly "*encourage or mandate* [the] *creation of a community-based network of service providers"* (Graddy & Chen, 2006; Poole, 2008; Johnston & Romzek, 2008; Chen, 2008; Provan & Kenis, 2008; all in Chen & Graddy, 2010, p. 406).

When I translate this to my cases of local networks aiming to fight child poverty, the public funding agencies are the Flemish and the Federal government who develop a contracting relationship with the leading organizations of these networks (i.e. the local government) and encourage them to create local interorganizational service networks and platforms. Municipalities are thus expected to adopt a coordinating role in the support of these projects and networks. The local government is responsible for contacting and including all the relevant actors in the field and has a considerable amount of autonomy to make use of the provided means in a way that best suits the local demands. These means can be invested in the appointment of a coordinator, in the organization of local meetings and activities for professionals and families in poverty or they can be invested in the construction of an actual box office or venue where the involved organizations collectively organize their activities. The Flemish and Federal government suggested that these project-based, short term subsidies would in time be embedded more structurally in the budget. This was however not the case, which meant that the long term embeddedness of these networks could not be guaranteed and eventually several of these funded networks ceased to exist.

I conclude that the tendency towards more vertical and horizontal division of labor translated into the establishment of local networks that are installed to enhance the collaboration and

coordination of different local services and organizations. In the following paragraph, I conceptually elaborate on these networks.

Networks: what's in a name?

An often mentioned issue in the battle against high levels of deprivation within a community is the fragmentation of services and policy levels (Allen, 2003; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Van Haute et al., 2015). Van Haute et al. (2015) identify different dimensions that define this fragmentation. A first form of fragmentation is *sectorial fragmentation*, which refers to the fact that services and organizations are often specialized in one area (education, pedagogical, cultural, etc.). Another form is *age segregation*, as services and organizations often focus on a specific age group (0-3 years old, -18 years old, adults, etc.). Thirdly, services and organizations can address specific target groups, such as migrants, (single) young parents, families with children, etc. A fourth form of fragmentation is situated on the policy level. Services and organizations can be organized, funded and governed on a local, regional or federal level (Van Haute et al., 2015).

Due to these different dimensions of fragmentation, the policy on child poverty and deprivation often lacks focus. It appears to be difficult to unite these different services and organizations to construct a substantial and comprehensive focus. This fragmentation is in sheer contrast with the fact that families often do not perceive their issues as separate from each other and it needs to be acknowledged that these different needs are often interlinked (Lister, 2004; Broadhead et al., 2008; in Van Haute et al., 2015).

Local networks of service organizations are therefore able to play a crucial role in addressing the complex problems of vulnerable groups such as families who live in poverty. The expertise of a diverse set of service organizations is often indispensable in the fight against these wicked issues. I take the definition of Provan and Milward (2001, p. 416-417) as a starting point, as they accurately define networks as "*service-delivery vehicles that provide value to local communities in ways that could not have been achieved through the uncoordinated provision of services by fragmented and autonomous agencies.*"

Raeymaeckers and De Corte (2016) elaborate on the concept of networks and discern three elements that characterize networks. First, the different actors of a network should experience a certain level of interdependence (O'Toole, 1997). Networks are thus a set of interrelated actors who, in order to achieve their own and mutual network goals, rely on the resources and expertise of each other (Raeymaeckers & De Corte, 2016). As already mentioned before, families in poverty are often confronted with *wicked issues* (Rittel & Webber, 1973). In order to deal with these complicated issues in an adequate manner, networks have to be encouraged and formed between different organizations and services. One actor is often not able to provide a comprehensive answer, which makes the exchange of expertise and resources indispensable.

A second characteristic of networks is that they pursue a common goal. In general, networks of service organizations have the common goal to provide better services to their target groups. These services need to align with the wicked issues that the target groups are confronted with. It is widely argued that networks are better able to address the gaps and the overlaps in the welfare landscape (Vangen & Huxham, 2013). Although these networks are able to better attune the different services that exist in this landscape, their organizations also continue to work and function independently.

Third, networks are sets of actors who organize themselves to handle these interdependencies (Hertting & Vedung, 2012). Networks thus adopt some form of governance in order to enhance and protect the connections that are formed. This network governance can take many shapes and

sizes and is considered as indispensable for networks to function accordingly. In the next paragraphs, I will further elaborate on this matter.

Integration versus differentiation: a network tension

The establishment of networks can thus be seen as a way to deal with the fragmentation of services on the one hand, and the hereto related wicked issues that vulnerable target groups are struggling with on the other hand. We should however be aware of the fact that networks are not a quick fix to these issues and that the way these networks are organized and structured, influences their effectiveness. In their seminal article, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) introduced differentiation and integration as the key challenges for the functioning of modern organizations as they show that the more differentiated an organization is, the more integrated its parts must be to perform effectively. They reason that organizations are often expected to cope with heterogeneous environments that increase the need for differentiation, but that "*the requirements for integration to achieve a unified effort are at least as great*" (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, p. 47). This differentiation translates into the segmentation of an organization into subsystems that all develop particular attributes to meet the requirements that are formulated by its environment or the tasks that they are supposed to complete (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967, Lammers et al., 1997). Integration on the other hand, refers to the creation of an optimal collaboration between these heterogeneous subsystems (Lammers et al., 1997). Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) point out that this integration is necessary to meet the predetermined goals (or tasks), which they refer to as the design, the production or the distribution of services.

Although the work of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) is based on intra-organizational research, we can argue that a similar challenge occurs in inter-organizational networks: networks should be differentiated enough to match the differentiation in the environment but they should also be well integrated to reach a 'unity in effort' (Buck et al. 2011, Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In other words, networks often struggle with the tension between integration and differentiation as they have to deal with the wicked issues that their target groups are struggling with without losing the 'unity in effort' that their collaboration provides to reach a common goal. The research of Buck et al. (2011, p. 490) showed that "*client outcomes improve with more differentiated services and with greater integration of those services*". They go on to point out that "*integration means coordination*" (Buck et al., 2011, p. 491), an idea that was already expressed by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). In this respect we follow Lammers et al. (1997) by emphasizing that the coordination between different departments or subsystems can enhance both the integration and the differentiation, as the coordinator functions as a broker who can and will make choices when necessary, but whose first job it is to enhance the collaboration.

This finding aligns with the research by Gittell and Weiss (2004), who discern different coordinating mechanisms that can enhance the integration among a differentiated set of service providers or organizations. When networks invest in meeting frequently and in the installation of routines, information systems and boundary spanners, this positively influences "*the frequency, timeliness, accuracy and problem-solving orientation of communication among* [the network partners] *while strengthening shared goals, shared knowledge and mutual respect.*" (Gittell & Weiss, 2004, p. 139). In the paragraph below, I will further elaborate on these coordination -, and governance mechanisms by zooming in on the research by Provan and Kenis (2008).

When I apply this tension of differentiation versus integration to local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty in Flanders and Brussels, I find that these networks are often characterized by a large diversity of organizations such as welfare organizations (OCMW, CAW), healthcare organizations (K&G, GPs, pharmacies, GGZ), schools and daycare centers, cultural organizations (libraries, art organizations, youth organizations) and poverty organizations

(Welzijnsschakels, Sociale Kruidenier). Although these different organizations are needed to address the complex problems that families are struggling with (financial issues, health issues, housing issues, pedagogical issues, social exclusion, etc.), they should also be integrated into a network in order for them to jointly tackle these intertwined issues.

As Buck et al. (2004) and Gittell and Weiss (2011) pointed out, network governance is essential in enhancing both integration and differentiation. In the next paragraph, I further elaborate on the crucial role of governance.

Governance: the 'conditio sine qua non' for networks

I already pointed out the importance of a diverse set of network actors in order to meet the complex issues that deprived target groups are struggling with. Although this diversity or differentiation is important, Buck et al. (2011) also pointed out that the integration of services is a necessary precondition to improve the living situation of the network's clients or target groups. According to Klijn et al. (2010), Edelenbos et al. (2013), Gittell and Weiss (2004) and Buck et al. (2011), network governance is imperative to achieve a sufficient level of integration within differentiated sets of service providers. Milward et al. (2009), Alter and Hage (1993), Provan and Kenis (2008), Huxham and Vangen (2005) and Klijn et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of governance in order for networks to achieve the predetermined goals in the complex interaction processes that characterize networks. For this reason, network governance will take center stage in this thesis.

Provan and Kenis (2008, p. 230) define governance as "*the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole*". This definition can be seen as a translation from organizational to network theory, as Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) already pointed out that, in the search for integration among a differentiated set of actors, the structure of an organization influences its effectiveness. The governance of networks can thus translate into the installation of structures and coordination mechanisms in order to guide the network to -, and through joint actions.

Besides defining 'governance', Provan and Kenis (2008) have developed a framework with three modes of network governance: a participant-governed network, a network administrative organization (NAO) and a lead organization-governed network. This typology has been widely used as a conceptual framework to study inter-organizational service networks (for an overview see: Popp et al., 2014). A key characteristic of this typology is the extent to which decision-making power is distributed or concentrated in the network.

In a shared participant governed network, no coordinating body is present and the decision-making power is equally distributed among network partners (Provan & Kenis, 2008). These partners decide which goals, services and problems they want to prioritize and how they want to manage this. This mode of governance will often have a positive effect on the connections between the different organizations and services involved. Also, the internal legitimacy within these networks will be higher as the partners are actively involved in the decision-making process. The downside of this mode of governance is that it is also characterized by inefficiency as decisions have to be approved by all network partners.

In the second type of network governance the decision-making power lies in the hands of a network administrative organization or NAO: an entity that does not provide services to the target group and who's only task is to govern the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008). This NAO is a network broker and plays "*a key role in coordinating and sustaining the network*" (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 236). This NAO may consist of one coordinator or a board can be installed. This board may be

installed for the sake of more internal legitimacy, which can be a problem within this more distant mode of governance.

In lead organization-governed networks, which is the third mode of network governance as presented by Provan and Kenis (2008), there is one leading organization who is in charge of the governance of the network. This organization has the main responsibility over the functioning of the network and also offers services to the target group. The fact that this organization is a public-nonprofit service organization and provides services towards the target group, discerns this mode of governance from the NAO-type of governance. In lead organization-governed networks, the leading organization takes charge and governs the collaboration between the different network partners, is in charge of the financial means and manages the different projects and aspects of the network. Besides this, the leading organization also has the main responsibility in overseeing the tension between integration and differentiation (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). All key decisions are coordinated through and by the leading organization. The governance of the network is highly centralized and brokered and is characterized by asymmetrical power. Provan and Kenis (2008) argue that because of the central role of the leading agency in this mode of network governance, decisions can be made more efficiently compared to the shared participant governed network. However, when the decision-making power is centrally located in the network, the inclusiveness of the decision-making process is threatened as well as the network's ability to be innovative (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

In this thesis, I zoom in on governance by a lead organization for two reasons. First, in the previous paragraph I already elaborated on the fact that local networks in the fight against child poverty in Belgium and Flanders are mostly subsidized as lead organization-governed networks where the local government is the main governing actor. Span et al. (2012a, 2012b) also point out that networks that are installed by a federal or regional government to deal with wicked societal issues such as poverty and social exclusion are often lead organization networks.

Second, this mode of network governance has become increasingly popular in practice and in research (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Isett et al., 2011; Span et al., 2012a, 2012b). Provan and Kenis (2008, p. 230) state that "*a critical role for governance is to monitor and control the behavior of management, who are hired to preside over the day-to-day activities*". Earlier research shows that leading organizations often install '*central mechanisms of control*' (Provan & Milward, 1995; in Chen & Graddy, 2010, p. 412) in order to increase the performance of the network. These central control mechanisms or the management of the day-to-day activities are the responsibility of the leading organization. In this respect, a leading organization typically appoints a coordinator to assist in the day-to-day governance of the network. Hence, the coordinator is considered as an important governing and brokering actor in these networks (Provan & Kenis 2008; Edelenbos et al. 2013).

Previous research by Mandell (2001), Kickert et al. (1997) and Agranoff and McGuire (2003) has elaborated on the different roles that network coordinators can adopt in the coordination of a network. Rethemeyer (2005) is however the first to structure these different roles into a top-down – bottom-up continuum, with the coordinator adopting a role as 'facilitator' on one end and the role of 'maestro' on the other end of the continuum. The research by Span et al. (2012a) uses this continuum as a starting point and constructs a typology of three different governance roles: the commissioner, the co-producer and the facilitator. A key feature of this typology is the extent to which decision-making power in the network is concentrated in the hands of the coordinator. At one extreme, the coordinator can make all decisions without consulting the network partners. At the other extreme, the decision-making power lies in the hands of the network partners (Span et al. 2012a).

At the top-down end of the continuum, the network coordinator adopts the role of commissioner. The coordinator has the main decisive voice and can make unilateral decisions when necessary while the network partners have limited input opportunities. This also implies that the coordinator has the main responsibility and has to take account for the actions of the network.

At the other end of the continuum, the network coordinator adopts the role of facilitator. In this case, the coordinator facilitates the collaboration between the different network partners without influencing the content related issues and the decision-making process. The coordinator is in charge of setting up meetings and supporting the collaboration, while the network partners make the decisions and choose the direction of the network. This implies that the partners are responsible for the network actions and the decisions that the network makes.

Situated between the top-down and bottom-up extremes, is the role of co-producer. A co-producer strives for a balanced decision-making process between the network partners and him-or herself and in doing so, creates a situation in which he or she adopts an equal role alongside the other partners in the network. The decisions are made collectively, taking all partners, the network coordinator included, into account. Consequently, the ultimate responsibility rests with all network partners and the network coordinator, who all have to be able to take account for the network.

This typology, constructed by Span et al. (2012a) adds significantly to the research on network governance as it explains these roles in relation to different contingency factors or network features. Span et al. (2012b, p. 186) claim that "*how governance roles influence the performance of local public networks is assumed to depend on contingency factors.*" In other words, there is "*no universal best way to govern a network*" (Span et al., 2012b, p. 191); the success of a certain role depends on a variety of network features. Their research emphasizes that the performance of the governance roles is dependent on the stability and complexity that characterize the network. Stability refers to the predictability of the network activities while complexity refers to the degree of coordination required to let the network perform well. According to Span et al. (2012b), networks that are categorized as stable and simple, will be more successful with a top-down type of governance (commissioner). The tasks in these networks can be described as relatively simple and network actors are to act in line with the strict regulations set by the government. These networks often have very low levels of diversity among network partners. To illustrate this, Span et al. (2012b) provide the example of local waste policies in the Netherlands (for more information see: Span et al., 2012b).

In this thesis I zoom in on service networks who are confronted with very diverse and complex demands and needs (ranging from financial and housing support to educational support). The fact that these demands are so complex, requires that the provided services are customized to the client (Span et al., 2012b). The available knowledge and resources need to be integrated by the coordinator to meet the complexity of these problems. Span et al. (2012b) argue that within these networks, the coordinator needs to adopt a facilitating role that allows all the network members to be involved in the decision-making process and because of this, the expertise and knowledge can be shared and integrated to provide answers to these complex problems.

These interesting findings concerning the most appropriate governance role that should be adopted by the governing actor should however be research in more detail and opened up to more network characteristics. Also, Span et al. (2012b) did not take the perceptions of the different actors that collaborate in these networks into account. For this reason, I take the above mentioned insights as a starting point and further elaborate on them. By conducting qualitative and comparative research between networks where the coordinators adopt different governance roles, I add another layer to the discussion regarding the most appropriate governance roles. I

challenge and complement the research by Span et al. (2012a, 2012b) and in doing so, provide recommendations for policy and network practitioners. Before going into these results, I will briefly provide an outline of my thesis and discuss the used methodology.

Outline of this thesis

In this thesis, I focus on the governance of lead organization-networks among public-nonprofit service organizations. Using qualitative research, the main aim of this thesis is to give insight into the governance structures and the coordination roles that exist within networks. Also, this thesis provides handles to policy and practitioners who operate in these networks on a daily basis. The four research aims that were presented in the introduction of this thesis, translated into four chapters.

In a first chapter, I focus on how governance is structured in twelve networks of service providers in Belgium. I zoom in on the importance of pursuing a good balance between efficiency and inclusiveness within networks of service providers and I unravel the network structures that occur in these twelve networks.

By unravelling these vertical structures, the important role of the coordinator in these networks of service providers becomes apparent. With the purpose of getting insight into the way these coordinators fulfill their coordination task, I used the previously mentioned framework of Span et al. (2012a). In chapter 2, I analyze the extent to which these different governance roles are able to enhance the process performance of networks of service organizations. I focus on three components to determine process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability within the network (Voets et al., 2008).

In a third chapter, I focus on how network coordinators are able to establish consensus in a network. As many scholars have argued that goal consensus among network partners enhances the performance of the network (Van de Ven, 1976; Provan & Kenis, 2008), I selected three out of the previous twelve networks to analyze the extent to which different types of coordinators are able to build consensus on a set of network goals in close collaboration with the nonprofit network partners. I explore three networks, coordinated by a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator.

In the last chapter that is based on one case-study, I focus on the coordination of networks of generalist and specialist professionals. I point out the importance of both the generalist and the specialist approach to service provision, and I make the link with the governance roles that a coordinator can adopt in networks where generalists and specialists collaborate.

Methodology

The results of this thesis are based on the research of twelve Flemish and Brussels local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty. Over the last decade, over 160 local networks have been founded in Belgium to improve the provision of services to families with children in poverty. In order to make a selection out of this large amount of networks, I used a purposive sampling method (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2008) while it allows researchers to get insight into the social processes of a given context, in our case the Flemish and Brussels context of public-nonprofit service networks.

I selected the researched networks based on four relevant criteria. First, the Public Center for Social Welfare had to be one of the network actors. While this organization has an established position in every municipality and is encouraged to apply for funding, it often took the lead in the network. Second, the network participants and the networks in general had to focus on families with children in poverty. By including this criterion, I exclude the networks that work with adults without involving the children in the network process. Third, the network had to be a various set of autonomous public and nonprofit service organizations. This implies that the set of participants cannot merge into one single, new organization which is the network. The collaboration between these independent and autonomous participants is a key characteristic of a network. Fourth and final, the child poverty rate in the municipality had to be higher than average in order for the local network to be included. I used the child poverty rates/deprivation rates from the Flemish childcare organization Kind & Gezin (Child & Family). The municipalities that rated 4 out of 7 criteria or more were considered as deprived.

As my aim was to get insight into the governance and coordination mechanisms within these networks, it was important to take the perceptions and the experiences of the different network actors into account. The results of this thesis are based on qualitative interviews that took place over a time span of four years. During this time, 132 qualitative interviews with different network actors of twelve networks, i.e. with the representatives of the leading organizations, with the network coordinators and with the network participants, have been conducted (see table 1). By approaching this research in a qualitative manner, I was able to get insight into the perceptions of these different network actors on the governance and the coordination within these networks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As the four chapters of this thesis focus on different aspects of the governance and coordination within these networks, the methodological specificities will be discussed in each chapter separately.

Network	Interviews with representatives of leading organizations	Interviews with coordinators	Interviews with participants
A	1	1	9
B	1	2	8
C	1	2	5
D	2	2	8
E	1	1	9
F	1	2	7
G	1	2	6
H	2	2	11
I	1	1	11
J	1	1	4
K	1	1	12
L	1	2	9

Table 1: Overview of conducted interviews in 12 networks

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Chapter 1

The governance of lead organization networks: balancing efficiency and inclusiveness

Chapter 1: The governance of lead organization networks: balancing efficiency and inclusiveness

Abstract

Literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of networks of nonprofit and public organizations in dealing with 'wicked problems'. In this study we examine in which ways networks, governed by a lead organization, deal with the tension between efficiency and inclusiveness while making decisions in networks consisting of a diverse set of network participants. Specifically, we focus on how governance is structured in twelve networks aimed at tackling child poverty, and characterized by a lead organization-type of governance structure (Provan & Kenis, 2008). Based on interviews with network participants and coordinators in these twelve networks, our results show that networks with a lead organization form of governance establish various levels of vertical complexity by adopting both personal (network coordinators) and group modes of governance (steering committee and workgroups) to balance efficiency and inclusiveness in decision-making.

Introduction

Networks of service organizations play a crucial role in addressing complex problems of vulnerable groups such as people living in poverty. Since the clients of these organizations are often confronted with 'wicked problems' (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Buck et al., 2011), one single organization is not able to fulfill the complex and multiple needs of these clients and the expertise of a diverse set of network actors becomes indispensable. Provan and Milward (2001) define these networks as 'service delivery vehicles' providing value to a population confronted with varying needs, in ways that could not be achieved by a single organization. Literature shows that the performance of such service networks is largely dependent upon the way collaboration among network actors is governed (Edelenbos et al., 2013; Provan & Kenis, 2008). One particularly important task of network governance is to establish a level of network integration among a diverse set of network actors (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Raeymaeckers & Kenis, 2016). Networks need the expertise of different service agencies to deal with the complex problems of their vulnerable target groups. At the same time, integration among this differentiated set of network actors is indispensable in order to fulfill the collective goals of the network. The extent to which networks are able to integrate an autonomous and diverse set of network participants is largely dependent on how networks are able to balance the tension between efficiency and inclusiveness (Provan & Kenis, 2008). An inclusive decision-making process takes the expertise of the network actors into account and is considered crucial when networks aim to address the complex problems their target group is confronted with (Edelenbos, et al., 2013; Span et al., 2012b; Raeymaeckers & Kenis, 2016). Additionally, studies show that an inclusive decision-making process can improve the sense of internal legitimacy among network actors, which increases their commitment to the network. However, Provan and Kenis (2008) argue that when networks consist of a large number of partners and aim to include the perspectives of all network participants, decisions are often made less efficiently, which makes the network less able to address the wicked problems of a target population in a timely manner. Also, these lengthy decision-making processes often cause network participants to lose interest and commitment to the network. In other words, decision-making has to achieve a certain level of efficiency in order for the network to move forward.

In contrast with shared participant networks where decisions are based on a consensus between participating network actors without the interference of one leading agency (Provan & Kenis, 2008), governance by a lead organization is often seen as more suited to establishing high levels of efficiency in decision-making (Provan & Kenis, 2008: Span et al., 2012b). In these networks, governance is primarily the responsibility of a single leading public agency and all major decisions run through this leading agency.

However, studies also show that because of the uneven distribution of decision-making power between a lead organization and other network participants, the inclusiveness of the decision-making process becomes a permanent challenge (Provan & Kenis, 2008). When all decision-making power lies in the hands of one leading agency, the exclusion of network participants from the decision-making process often results in lowered commitment and higher turnover rates (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Håkansson & Ford, 2002).

In this chapter we analyze how, in lead organization-governed networks, a leading agency can balance efficiency and inclusiveness in network decision-making. In particular, we draw on the insights of Alter and Hage (1993), Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Bratton and Chiaramonte (2006) and Lindencrona et al. (2009) to show that lead organization-governed networks vary in the extent to which they establish levels of vertical complexity by hiring coordinators, installing steering committees and forming workgroups. Our results show that in networks, levels of vertical

complexity are established to promote inclusiveness by providing multiple methods for participants to make a contribution to the decision-making process while still pursuing efficiency.

This chapter makes an important contribution to the literature by extending the well-known typology of Provan and Kenis (2008). While Provan and Kenis (2008) present the lead organization-governed network as a vertically complex network, consisting of a hierarchy between the lead organization and network participants, our empirical findings show that within this form of network governance, different subtypes emerge with varying levels of vertical complexity. More precisely, we identify different types of lead organization-governed networks by analyzing the extent to which these networks develop levels of vertical complexity. Second, as a network consists of different actors with different needs, preferences and access to resources, participants often pursue very different goals (Balser & McClusky, 2005) and their expectations towards the network can be different. A multi-stakeholder perspective is therefore important when explaining why a particular governance structure emerges in networks of nonprofit and public service agencies. Data collection should consider the perceptions of the different actors present in the network (i.e. the network participants, the lead organization and network coordinator) to get a more nuanced view of the collaboration. We address this issue by using a multi-stakeholder approach to identify a number of key factors that explain why certain networks develop these layers of vertical complexity. Therefore, our study complements earlier studies by explicitly making a distinction between the perceptions of these different network actors.

Differentiation versus integration: governance and vertical complexity

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) introduced differentiation and integration as the key dilemma in the functioning of modern organizations. In their famous work they show that the more differentiated an organization is, the more integrated its parts must be to perform effectively. A similar challenge occurs in inter-organizational networks: differentiated sets of collaborating organizations need to achieve 'unity in effort' at the network-level to fulfil a common goal (Provan & Milward, 1995; Buck et al., 2011; Raeymaeckers & Kenis, 2016). When trying to establish integration among a very diverse set of network actors it is crucial to make decisions in close collaboration with all members of the network. As networks are established to combine the expertise and knowledge of a variety of organizations in order to tackle 'wicked problems', it is important that members are involved in the decision-making process of the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Raeymaeckers, 2016).

However, literature shows that when more members are included in the network, and the diversity among network participants increases, the participation of all members in the decision-making process becomes difficult and the network will function less efficiently (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Provan & Kenis, 2008). To consult every member and to build a consensus among network participants before making decisions takes time and energy and will negatively influence network efficiency (Provan & Kenis, 2008). Additionally, Håkansson and Ford (2002) emphasize that when the network allows its members to participate in the decision-making process, the latter can influence the network decisions and activities in such a way that their own objectives are prioritized instead of the overall network goals. When the network actors only focus on the attainment of their own goals and not on the collective goals of the network this can hinder the general goal attainment process of the network. However, when the network limits the participation and inclusiveness of its members in the decision-making process due to reasons of efficiency, and network members have less influence on network decisions and activities, this may not only hinder the fulfilment of their individual goals but also make it less appealing for them to continue participating in the network. In these cases, member organizations do not feel in control and may consider leaving the network.

To deal with these difficulties, networks need to build governance structures that allow efficient decision-making, while at the same time including the expertise of the variety of network actors. In the next paragraph we elaborate on the role of governance in this matter.

Governing the network

The well-known typology of Provan and Kenis (2008) is used in an overwhelming number of studies on network governance (for an overview see Isett et al., 2011; Popp et al., 2014). These researchers define governance as "*the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole*" (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 230). They make a distinction between three different forms of network governance: lead organization-governance; governance by a network administrative organization (NAO); and shared participant governance. This typology has been widely used as a conceptual framework to study inter-organizational service networks (Popp et al., 2014). A key characteristic of this typology is the extent to which decision-making power is distributed or concentrated in the network. In a shared participant governed network, no coordinating body is present and the decision-making power is equally distributed across the network participants. In the second type of network governance the decision-making power lies in the hands of a network administrative organization or NAO: an entity that does not provide services to the target group and who's only task is to govern the network. In lead organization-governed networks, the

responsibility for network governance lies in the hands of one leading organization. These networks are 'formal networks' that are officially set up by a convening body where membership may either be coerced or there may exist some compelling resource incentive to participate. In these networks, the integration among service organizations and the formalizing of ties among service actors in the network is mainly established by the lead organization (Provan & Milward, 1995; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Human & Provan, 2000; Graddy & Chen, 2006; Span et al., 2012b). All key decisions are coordinated through and by the leading agency. The governance of the network becomes highly centralized and is characterized by asymmetrical power.

Provan and Kenis (2008) argue that because of the central role of the leading agency in this last type of network governance, decisions can be made very efficiently. However, when the decision-making power is centrally located in the network, the inclusiveness of the decision-making process is threatened as well as its ability to be innovative. For example, Håkansson and Ford (2002) demonstrate that the more a formal network structure allows one or more coordinating bodies to control the decision-making process and limits member organizations from participating in network level decision-making, the less effective and innovative the network will be, which, in the end, will harm the different organizations taking part in the network.

We can therefore assume that leading agencies are challenged to build an inclusive decision-making process, without losing the advantage of efficiency, which is an important feature of this type of network governance (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In this chapter we will illustrate that lead organizations balance the tension between inclusiveness and efficiency by establishing layers of vertical complexity. We elaborate on this concept in the following paragraph.

Vertical complexity

In the organizational literature, vertical complexity is conceived of as an organization's vertical structure. When more layers of formal authority are established between top management and front-line workers, the organization becomes more complex. The vertical complexity of the organization deepens as the number of layers between senior management and workers increases (Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006). In this context, vertical complexity refers to the layers of authority separating the top governance body from the on-the-ground implementers within an organization. While drawn from the traditional organizational design literature, the concept of vertical complexity can be transferred to the study of network governance (Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006). In this context, vertical complexity refers to the different vertical layers in a network through which network actors (including the leading organization) make decisions.

In lead organization-governed networks a first vertical layer, as already mentioned above, is the lead organization. This leading organization often receives and distributes the funding of the network and is responsible for making the final decisions regarding the achievement of the network's collective goals (Provan & Kenis, 2008). However, a growing amount of research in the field of network governance and network management reveals that the vertical network governance structures are a great deal more complex than the typology of Provan and Kenis (2008) reflects (see, for example Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Chen & Graddy, 2010).

Next to the lead organization, we identify a second vertical layer while drawing further on the concept of 'personal methods' as defined by Alter and Hage (1993) Personal methods refer to the role of the coordinator in the network. Multiple studies illustrate the importance of network coordinators and managers for the functioning of a network (Klijn et al., 2010). In the context of our study we can assume that network coordinators are hired by and therefore affiliated to a lead organization (Span et al., 2012b). The role of network coordinators in these networks is often defined in terms of 'bringing people together' and 'enabling interactions' (Edelenbos, et al., 2013).

They initiate and facilitate interaction among actors, explore new ideas, make a synthesis of the views and exchange information (Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Burt, 2004), and can therefore be considered as brokers among different organizations in the network (Burt, 2004). In fact, the connective capacity of these network coordinators must be considered as an important factor for the success of a network (Edelenbos et al., 2013). Klijn et al. (2010) summarize the activities of network coordinators by making a distinction between four different categories: (1) Exploring content, (2) arranging the structure of the interaction, (3) establishing process rules and (4) connecting (see Klijn et al., 2010). Within the context of a lead organization-governed network, we can thus consider these network coordinators, who are often hired by the lead organization, as crucial for the functioning and success of networks as they can influence the structures that occur in the network and as they can adopt an important broker position between the different vertical layers.

Next to the role of personal network coordination mechanisms, we argue that the vertical complexity of network governance can also be extended by focusing on group methods of coordination (Alter & Hage, 1993; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Lindencrona et al., 2009). The lead organization can decide to establish a network steering committee as an example of group methods of interaction (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Lindencrona et al., 2009). A steering committee is a set of participants that invest more time in the network compared to the network participants who are not involved in this steering committee. They often assist the coordinator and the lead organization in the search for a common ground or consensus concerning the vision and objectives of the network. Huxham and Vangen (2000) reason that most networks install a steering committee comprised of different network participants who have joint decision-making power in the network. Empirical evidence suggests that these network steering committees can facilitate the administration and steering of a network through facilitating information exchange and problem-solving among network participants (Alter & Hage, 1993; Lindencrona et al., 2009; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). Subsequently, these network steering committees are also able to enhance the willingness or commitment among participants to participate (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Keast et al., 2004; Kenis & Provan, 2009). Chen and Graddy (2010) even find that networks who install a steering committee to coordinate activities across the participants are more effective in achieving client goals.

Another example of group methods of coordination within networks is the presence of workgroups (Jehn et al., 1999; Chung & Hossain, 2009; Cummings, 2004). These workgroups can be defined as subsets of members that focus on discussing one theme, project, action or goal identified by the whole network or by the steering committee. These workgroups can also be more practical in that they execute different concrete tasks in order to realize one project or action. Broad network participants – and often also the members of the steering committee – choose voluntarily if and in which workgroup(s) they engage. Researchers such as Jehn et al. (1999) and Chung and Hossain (2009) have focused on these flatter and more decentralized types of group methods. Jehn et al. (1999, p. 741) point out that these workgroups are characterized by "*rich synchronous communication*"; Cummings (2004) argues that the level of knowledge sharing within these workgroups increases when the members are more structurally diverse.

Based on the above, we conclude that the lead organization type of network governance has the advantage of efficiency in the decision-making process. We however emphasize that because of the uneven power distribution in these networks, they are challenged to increase the inclusiveness of the decision-making process. Based on the studies we mentioned above, we can make a distinction between different layers of vertical complexity that may be established by a lead organization to balance efficiency and inclusiveness while making decisions in the network. In this study we focus on the extent to which these layers are established in lead organization-

governed networks aiming to tackle child poverty and how decisions are made within these layers.

Methodology

Case selection

In Flanders and Brussels, we found that over the last decade, over 160 networks have been founded at the level of the municipality or city to improve the provision of services to families with children in poverty. Most of these networks were the result of federal or local funding, as the fight against child poverty becomes more of a priority. In all of these networks participants exchange information about families in poverty and undertake different actions to improve service delivery to families with children. Because of the way these networks are locally funded, a dominant majority of them have adopted a lead organization form of governance; albeit with a great deal of variation within this general form. Because of the dominance of this form of governance among these networks and our interest in how this form of governance balances the tension between efficiency and inclusion, we selected twelve cases in order to conduct a more in depth analysis of the various structural adaptations within this broad form of governance and the reasons for why these structures were adopted.

In order to make a representative selection, we used a purposive sampling method (Yin, 2014) that allows us to meet our research aim. Both Bryman (2008) and Yin (2014) state that this sampling method allows researchers to get insight into the social processes of a given context, in our case the Flemish and Brussels context of nonprofit service networks. As our aim is to better understand the way lead organization-governed networks are structured and how the different network actors perceive these structures, we argue that this sampling method will advance our understanding of this particular context. In a next step, the possibility of further and broader research and generalization can be considered.

We made our case selection based on four criteria. First of all, a public agency affiliated to the local government has to be the leading agency of the network. Due to the funding in Belgium, the Public Center for Social Welfare is often encouraged to become the main applicant and is therefore often one of the leading agencies in the network. Second, the network and its organizations have to work with families with children in poverty. This excludes all networks that exclusively work with parents without involving the children in the network process. Third, the network has to consist of a diverse set of autonomous nonprofit organizations. This means that, in order to be part of our research selection, the different autonomous organizations cannot be merged into one single, new organization. And last but not least, the child poverty rate in the municipality has to be higher than the average rate as we wanted to select networks that all focus on fighting child poverty, though in different ways. Based on the rates published by the Flemish childcare organization 'Kind & Gezin' (Child & Family), the municipalities had to rate at least 4 out of 7 on the child deprivation scale that was developed by this organization. For the Brussels cases, a similar scale was used.

As our study aims to analyze the structure of networks dealing with complex and wicked issues, we considered these criteria very important for selecting the appropriate cases for our research. As a result, twelve networks were selected, as this provided us with enough variation that was still manageable research-wise. In table 2, the most important characteristics of these twelve networks are presented.

Network	Representatives of leading organizations	Number of coordinators	Number of participants	Represented sectors	Target group	Type of provided services
A	1	1	14	5 Welfare Health Education Parenting support Cultural	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Events and information sessions for professionals and target group
B	1	2	9	6 Welfare Health Education Parenting support Cultural Poverty organization	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty	Parenting courses for target group and material support through the network's second hand store
C	1	2	5	4 Welfare Health Parenting support Poverty organization	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Long-term support trajectories for families in poverty, parent support groups and poverty awareness trainings for professionals
D	2		28	5 Welfare Health Education Parenting support Leisure	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty	Creating an accessible and adjusted entrance to the local services, and creating a platform in order to make recommendations towards the federal government
E	1	1	25	5 Welfare Health Education	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Meeting and getting to know the other local actors and facilitating and optimizing the referral system

				Parenting support Cultural		
F	1	2	12	3 Welfare Health Education	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty	Meeting and getting to know the other local actors and creating common initiatives for the target group
G	1	2	9	3 Welfare Health Parenting support	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	The creation of a pool of family coaches who offer long term support trajectories on several domains
H	2	2	21	5 Welfare Health Education Parenting support Cultural	Families with small children in poverty in the municipality	Getting to know the different local actors and creating a platform in order to make recommendations towards the federal government
I	1	1	21	4 Welfare Education Parenting support Poverty organization	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Information exchange between -, and information sessions for professionals with a focus on making the bridge between welfare and education
J	1	1	9	4 Welfare Health Education Parenting support	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Getting to know the different local actors and exchanging information
K	1	1	16	4 Welfare Health Education Parenting support	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty	Getting to know the different local actors and initiating several common projects for the target group
L	1	2	43	5 Welfare Health Education Parenting support Cultural	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty	Improving the visibility and the accessibility of the local services, improving the referral system, getting to know the different local actors and creating common projects

Table 2: Network characteristics

Qualitative interviews

We organized interviews with the representatives of the leading organization, the coordinators of the networks and the network participants in order to unravel their perceptions on the governance of these twelve networks. The first step in the data-gathering process was to interview the representative of the leading organization and the coordinators of each network in order to get insight into how the networks were governed. The main focus here was: is there a steering committee, are there workgroups, is there a coordinator? It is important to emphasize that in our interviews and in our analysis, we talk about the structure that occurs in the daily network practice, which has not necessarily been formalized into the network structure. Besides this, we also question these respondents about their perceptions regarding these network structures.

The second step was to interview the other network participants. To identify these participants, we first asked the coordinator to point out the organizations he or she had the most contact with. We then started to interview members of these organizations about how the decisions are normally made and which processes occurred throughout the network activities. Through these questions, we gained insight into how they perceived the network structure and how this influenced their network-experience. In addition, we also contacted organizations that were not pointed out by the coordinator but by the previously identified participants, to avoid potential bias.

Network	Interviews with representatives of leading organizations	Interviews with coordinators	Interviews with participants
A	1	1	9
B	1	2	8
C	1	2	5
D	2	2	8
E	1	1	9
F	1	2	7
G	1	2	6
H	2	2	11
I	1	1	11
J	1	1	4
K	1	1	12
L	1	2	9

Table 3: Number of qualitative interviews

We used a semi-structured questionnaire in which we focus on the different aspects of our research: (1) the governance of the network in daily network practice, (2) the way this governance translates into network processes, and (3) the perception of the network participants on network governance and how this influenced the decision-making process. The respondents were asked to illustrate their findings with examples of real-life situations and discussions during the network meetings. Table 3 shows the number of lead organization representatives, network coordinators and network participants that were interviewed. In some of the networks, the leading organization is represented by two individuals, who for example work in different departments but are both occupied with the organization of the network. In some of the networks, we found that two coordinators are hired, who are both concerned with the coordination of the network. In these cases, we always interviewed both.

After the interviews were fully transcribed, we used NVivo-software for open coding, followed by a process of axial coding (Berg, 1989). In this last phase, the different open codes were grouped into categories and sub-categories based on the previous three subdivisions (i.e. governance, network processes and perceptions).

During the analysis we introduced some additional procedures to enhance the validity of this research, and to ensure that our research measures reflect what they are intending to measure (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). First of all, the coding process was supported by a codebook developed in close collaboration between the two researchers who worked on this project. The codebook was reviewed after analyzing each interview and after every coding round. This resulted in a codebook that was straightforward and unambiguous.

Another way in which we ensured the validity of our conclusions involved the large number of interviews that were conducted in each research case. We made sure that the selection of interviewed organizations reflected the diversity of the network. We pursued a balance between the views of the network participants, the network coordinators and the representatives of the lead organization. The analyzed data had to contain the insights of a number of coordinators and participants in order to get a more nuanced view of the collaboration.

Results

In this section, we present our results and clarify the extent to which lead organization networks establish levels of vertical complexity in their governance structure. We also look for explanations that account for these structures. Furthermore, we zoom in on the perceptions of the different network actors on how they perceive these structures in everyday network practice.

Our results show that the governance of lead organization networks of public-nonprofit organizations proves to be more complex than originally illustrated by Provan and Kenis (2008). In all of our cases, the lead organization has initiated the network and manages the financial means of the network. The lead organization received the funding to establish a local network and, consequently, has the mandate to distribute the funding through the network actors. The lead organization thus has the mandate to make all decisions about the functioning of the network, the goals of the network and the specific actions the network develops to attain its goals. We however notice that in all of our networks the lead organization has established different layers of vertical complexity to include the perspectives and expertise of network participants in the decision-making process. Consequently, we can state that different layers of vertical complexity are established to create a balance between efficiency and inclusiveness. However, we distinguish between three vertical layers, a network coordinator, a steering committee and workgroups of network participants. Table 4 gives an overview of the network cases and their vertical structure.

Vertical structure	Leading organization Coordinator(s)	Leading organization Coordinator(s) Steering committee	Leading organization Coordinator(s) Workgroups	Leading organization Coordinator(s) Steering committee Workgroups
Network	E J	A K	B C I	D F G H L

Table 4: Network structure

1. Network coordinator

Our findings show that in all networks, the lead organization appoints a network coordinator who is responsible for the coordination tasks. Even though Kenis and Provan (2009) consider the lead organization as the main governing body in the network, our results show that it is appropriate to make a distinction between the lead organization and the coordinator who is often affiliated to this lead organization.

Most respondents in our networks emphasize that the coordinator was a very, if not the most important person in the network. Several respondents saw this person as the '*captain'* or the '*centerpiece'* of the network, who is in charge of the practical organization and who also gives content to the network. The coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the network. In most of our networks the coordinator facilitates interactions among member organizations, formulates the goals of the networks, decides which actions must be organized to fulfill the goals of the networks and is in charge of the execution of network decisions.

In most networks the connection between the network coordinator and the lead organization is very close, as the coordinators are mostly hired by the leading organization. The network coordinator and the lead organization discuss all major aspects of the network such as network goals, actions, conflicts and how the financial means are spent. In all of the networks, all decisions

must finally be ratified by the leading organization. We however argue that most network coordinators fulfill a very important mediating or broker role in the network. Our findings show that this mediating role allows the network coordinators to restore the power balance between network participants and the lead organization in a network. In several cases the network participants were afraid that the unequal distribution of power could result in a network where all decisions were made by the leading agency. This made it difficult for them to get involved in a network where the leading organization appeared to be in control and had all decision-making power. For this reason, the member organizations perceive the coordinator as a network actor who could mediate between network participants and the leading agency.

> "*I would describe her as a mediator. It's not someone who really makes decisions. But of course, she has to take up the responsibility towards the* [leading organization]. *She has to be able to filter a decision from the group* [network participants]." (Participant Network E)

The network coordinators make sure that the perspectives of the network participants are taken into account when decisions are ratified by the lead organization. By doing so, a more inclusive decision-making process can be assured. This finding is illustrated in the following quote where the coordinator confirms her mediating role between the network actors and the leading agency:

> "*There is a lot of weighing and mediating. Participant A wants this, participant B wants something else. The municipality and the Public Center for Social Welfare have their own vision and I am caught in between and I try to get everyone moving in the same direction.*" (Coordinator Network D)

In some of our networks the lead organization hired a second coordinator and established a clear division of tasks between these coordinators. In several networks, the first coordinator is occupied with the external legitimacy (Human & Provan, 2000) of the network and the contacts with the leading organization. He or she is occupied with tasks such as applying for funding, the financial management and the communication with the leading organization. The second and in some cases even the third coordinator is more often hired to manage the internal network affairs and takes care of the internal legitimacy of the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Human & Provan, 2000), such as the connections between the different network participants and the coordination of the network activities. He or she is often the day-to-day, more approachable focal point of the network, both towards the network participants and the target population.

> "*At first, the first coordinator chaired the meetings and I* [the second coordinator] *adopted the role of the coordinator for the families and for the parent meetings.* […] *At first, she did the meetings and I did the more practical implementation. Now, I help with chairing the meeting as well.*" (Second coordinator Network C)

An important finding is that in these networks, the additional coordinators are also perceived as a way of encouraging participation in network decision-making. In some networks a second coordinator is hired to resolve disputes between the leading organization and network participants and their target groups. Several respondents from member organizations experienced that some families in poverty have had bad experiences with the leading organizations. In this case, a second coordinator, who has direct contact with the target group and functions as an approachable contact person, might overcome these conflicts or tensions as he or she is often less directly connected to the leading organization and maintains a close contact with the target group. We can thus conclude that in networks where multiple coordinators are hired, these coordinators are perceived as important for establishing an inclusive decision-making process (Provan & Kenis, 2008) by adopting a mediating and connecting role between the network participants and the leading agency (Edelenbos et al., 2013).

2. Steering committee

Next to the coordinator, the presence of a steering committee is the most common form of vertical complexity within lead organization-governed networks and an example of a group method of network coordination (Alter & Hage, 1993; Lindencrona et al., 2009). These steering committees consist of representatives from a variety of participant organizations and are generally chaired by the network coordinator(s). In most of our networks the coordinator facilitates the discussions among members of the steering committee and communicates the decisions and input of the steering committee to the leading organization and the network participants.

In most networks this steering committee consists of network actors with a high level of commitment to the network (Milward & Provan, 2006) who are able to invest more time and resources in the network. The following network participant voluntarily choses to be involved in a steering committee of participants who get together more often than the entire network.

> *"There's a small group that gets together more frequently. From the beginning we were aware of the fact that we had limited time. So we really had to decide what we wanted to do and what we wanted to achieve. And we chose that we wanted to do something about it [the problem of child poverty]."* (Participant Network A)

In other networks the members of the steering committee are those participants that were already involved from the start of the network. They helped the coordinator to determine a common starting point or consensus concerning the vision and objectives of the network.

> *"I think the steering committee is very important. Starting with a small group and exploring if we could find a common vision, common goals. We wrote everything down.* [...] *We did this exercise to be sure that we all agreed about how the network was going to take shape and how we were going to work together.* [...] *That way, we were sure that we were all going to stay part of the network."* (Coordinator Network H)

The network participants in the steering committee invest more in the network in terms of time and energy than the network participants that are not participating in the steering committee. In most cases, the network participants in the steering committee work more actively on the theoretical side of the network development and activities. More specifically, they make decisions regarding the vision and goals of the network. In the networks in our research, the steering committees discussed the concept of 'poverty' and how this issue should be approached. The steering committee often also adopts the role of spokesman towards the lead organization to draw attention to issues and shortcomings.

> "*The discussion in the steering committees is much more related to the content: how are we going to organize the network, which themes are we going to discuss during the next meeting, which trainings would be interesting for the network participants. These things are discussed in the steering committee, as this group is much more manageable and workable than the 32 participants all together.*" (Coordinator Network F)

In line with the abovementioned findings that explain why a coordinator is often hired, we found that an important reason for the presence of a steering committee is the need to influence the decision-making process in the network. Most of the respondents felt the need to install a steering committee from the moment they suspected that the leading organization would make decisions without consulting the network participants. Our respondents emphasize that a steering committee allows the members to have more frequent meetings with each other but also with the lead organization. The committee members are more frequently present during network meetings and are often more actively supporting the development of the network. The high intensity of

network meetings between members of the steering committee, the coordinator(s) and the leading organization therefore allows the network participants to influence the decision-making process in the network and to raise concerns more directly towards the lead organization.

> "*There's distrust between the voluntary and the institutional organizations, which is sometimes justified. Sometimes, the leading organization says 'we want this, we decide the hour, the date, etc.'. And then we have to say 'no, we don't accept that'. Now, we make the decisions together.*" (Participant Network H)

3. Workgroups

A third layer in the vertical complexity of a network refers to the division of network actors into various workgroups. These workgroups only appear in networks with a very advanced level of vertical complexity. These workgroups can be considered as a group coordination method in the network. The workgroups differ from the steering committee because they are mainly organized as a preparatory brainstorm on specific issues, after which the steering committee makes the final decision. The steering committee thus uses the input and information from the workgroups to make decisions in collaboration with the coordinator(s) and the representative(s) of the leading organization. These workgroups are also installed to prepare the implementation of the decisions made by the steering committee or lead organization in the network. Within these workgroups, the network participants often focus on one theme, project, action or goal identified by the whole network or by the steering committee.

> "*There are different workgroups with different themes. One of them is a workgroup about playing with children and encountering other parents through this, in which different organizations got together that were all involved in these topics. They discussed if a common label might be developed.*" (Participant Network F)

When the number of network participants is high, networks tend to have more difficulties to involve everyone equally and participants often feel less included. This means that the higher the number of participants and the higher the level of diversity among these participants, the more networks are confronted with the challenge to increase the commitment among network actors to avoid free riding behavior (Milward & Provan, 2006). Our results show that differentiated networks divide the network into smaller workgroups, in which the participants focus on one specific goal or project. Our results thus show that workgroups are used as a way to increase the involvement of the network actors by creating a platform for discussion on a specific topic. Previous research (Cummings, 2004) already pointed out that the level of knowledge sharing within these workgroups increases when the members are more structurally diverse. The members of these groups are in most cases selected based on the expertise that is necessary to tackle the issue the workgroup is dealing with. For example, some network participants focus on the needs of small children, others have more experience in working with adolescents or parents. Membership is mostly voluntary, although in some of the networks, the workgroups were established and grouped by the coordinator.

Through the creation of workgroups consisting of a limited set of network actors specialized in one single topic or issue, the network participants can find 'their place' in the network. Some of the respondents express this finding by emphasizing that they feel more involved when collaborating in smaller subnetworks of "*like-minded people*". The interviews showed that these kinds of working arrangements make them feel more indispensable as they can provide their expertise more exclusively.

> "*So we made the workgroups keeping in mind the different needs of the participants. We had a group with the teachers, the school principals, the pedagogical supporters. And at a given*

moment in time I was like, how are we going to tackle the issues? So we created subgroups to be well aware of what was going on in the schools, what is going on in the homework-support-groups, etc." (Leading organization Network I)

"I really like the discussions that we have in the workgroups. It permits us to open up and to explain our problems. And also, it's easier to search for solutions in these workgroups." (Participant Network I)

The latter quote supports the observation that network participants enjoyed discussing topics and issues with other participants with similar types of expertise. The homogeneity that was created in these workgroups created a sense of belonging and trust among participants which, according to many of our respondents, resulted in very efficient discussions and recommendations that the steering committee could take into account when making decisions in close collaboration with the lead organization. Homogeneous workgroups thus have the ability to increase the commitment of network actors by providing them with a platform to debate important issues and tackle problems of the network.

Conclusion

Lead organization networks of public-nonprofit service organizations prove to be more complex than originally put forward by Provan and Kenis (2008). In this chapter, we unraveled the structures of different public-nonprofit service networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty in Flanders and Brussels. The focus of our analysis has been on the vertical complexity that can be established in lead organization networks to balance the efficiency and inclusiveness trade-off in the network. Previous research on organizational structures and design by Bratton and Chiaramonte (2006) already focused on this vertical complexity, which can be defined as "*the depth of the organization's hierarchy*" (Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006, p. 460). In previous research however, too little attention has been devoted to the vertical complexity that may occur in lead organization-governed networks. As expected, our results indeed indicate that the governance structures of lead organization-governed networks show variations according to the levels of vertical complexity that are established. In this chapter we explored and described these different vertical governance structures and found that these vertical levels are established to balance the efficiency versus inclusiveness trade-off.

A first layer of vertical complexity that has already been unraveled by Provan and Kenis (2008), is the level of the lead organization. This lead organization, often receiving network funding, is in charge of the network, decides what happens with the (financial) resources, ratifies decisions, can decide over the structure of the network and most often hires the coordinator. In this research, we however find that lead organization networks are often more complex than originally put forward by Provan and Kenis (2008), as we find three more layers of vertical complexity within these lead organization networks.

A second layer of vertical complexity that we distinguished, is the level of the network coordinator. He or she is hired to manage the network and acts as a broker between the lead organization and the network participants. According to our results the coordinator adopts an interesting intermediate role. On the one hand, the coordinator can provide a forum for input from network participants, which can then be passed on to the leading organization in a more synthesized manner. On the other hand, the coordinator can translate the demands and wishes from the lead organization to the network participants in a way that they better understand and can relate to. The network participants consider the coordinator as a broker who encourages participants to provide input and feel integrated in the network process. Due to the presence of a network coordinator, the network partners feel more included in the decision-making process, and the communication between the lead organization and the network partners becomes more efficient.

The third layer of vertical complexity refers to the presence of a steering committee. The members of these committees are highly engaged in the network and have the opportunity to provide input, which enhances the integration of these network participants within the network. The members of these steering committees are often able to provide the necessary expertise to fulfill network goals and are often consulted before or during the decision-making process. The partners of the steering committee thus feel more included while the network can function more efficiently due to the installation of this compact and decisive steering committee.

A fourth layer are workgroups among network participants. By subdividing the network participants in different workgroups, they are able to provide more input on specific themes or network matters. Workgroups can focus on specific network actions or they can zoom in on the different manifestations of child poverty. Our research reveals that the members of these workgroups feel more included and they feel as if their voice is being heard. The results of these workgroups are transferred to the coordinator and the steering committee, who take this input

into consideration in the decision-making process. When participants feel that their input is taken into account, this increases the level of integration of the network. We can conclude that these workgroups have a positive effect on the inclusiveness of network actors in the network, while they also enhance the efficiency of the network as more knowledge is shared among network partners (Cummings, 2004).

Our findings show that the concept of vertical complexity originally developed in literature on organizational design (Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006) should be adapted to fit the complex reality of networks and network governance. First, our findings clearly show that the layers of vertical complexity are installed to give network actors the opportunity to provide input, to share their views and concerns and to allow them to influence the decision-making process. While representatives of the leading organization emphasize the importance of these vertical layers in terms of inclusiveness of the expertise of network actors, the network participants emphasize the importance of these levels of vertical complexity when they feel the need to influence the decision-making process and to level out an uneven distribution of power as much as possible.

Second, we also observe that despite a high level of inclusiveness, a vertical hierarchy in decision-making structures is still present in these networks. In all of our networks the leading organization still has to ratify every major decision in the network. Also, the steering committees are always coordinated by the network coordinator. This coordinator is hired by the leading organization and makes sure that the interests of the leading organization are represented in the discussions within the steering committee. We also observe that the workgroups at the member-level are established to prepare discussions and decisions that must be made by the steering committee, providing an opportunity for less committed members to make a contribution to the decision-making structure of the network.

We thus argue that in networks of public-nonprofit service organizations, vertical complexity between the leading organization, coordinators, steering committees and workgroups is used to make efficient decisions by centralizing the decision-making power in a lead organization while at the same time maximizing the input and expertise of network actors (i.e. inclusiveness). Based on our results we could say that networks balance efficiency and inclusiveness by reducing the number of participants involved in decision-making (i.e. steering committees) and/or by narrowing the scope of decision-making (i.e. workgroups). Drawing further on the argument of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) that integration must be established by taking into account the diverse set of actors, we can confirm Milward (2017) and Lindencrona et al. (2009) by pointing out that differentiated networks can achieve higher levels of integration by installing organizational mechanisms such as network coordinators, steering committees and workgroups. The creation of vertical layers of complexity can enhance the integration and inclusiveness of a diverse set of network participants and it can also enhance the efficiency by means of the development of shared beliefs, common values and norms, and a unity of purpose (Milward, 2017).

This chapter however leaves a number of issues unaddressed. First of all, our research is descriptive in nature and does not provide an evaluative study of the effectiveness of vertically complex lead organization-governed networks. Research by Provan and Sebastian (1998) has emphasized the link between network effectiveness and the integration through network cliques of service organizations. Future research should zoom in on the link between network effectiveness (Provan & Milward, 2001; Voets et al., 2008) and the occurrence of vertical levels of network complexity such as personal methods and group methods of network coordination, (Alter & Hage, 1993; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Lindencrona et al., 2009).

Another aspect of governance that is not addressed in this research, but that is however indispensable in network governance research, is the focus on the governance role of the coordinator. In this research, we approach the role of the network coordinator as simple, rigid and straightforward, which is not the case in real life network practice. In previous research by Span et al. (2012a, 2012b), Mandell (2001), Kickert et al. (1997) and Agranoff and McGuire (2003), the role of the coordinator has been examined more carefully. The latter studies find that network coordinators or managers can adopt different roles and strategies. In this chapter, we did not take variations among network managers into account in the analysis of vertical levels of network complexity and the connection with the efficiency versus inclusiveness trade-off. Further research should be conducted on the governance roles or strategies that can be adopted by network coordinators while governing the efforts of steering committees and workgroups.

A last aspect that was not taken into account and that can trigger future research is the fact that networks and network structures evolve over time. Based on this research, we assume that vertical complexity is dynamic. Provan and Kenis (2008) argue that as the number of network participants grows, the amount of potential relationships between network participants also increases exponentially. Based on our findings, we can presume that the more diverse and the bigger a network becomes, the more need there will be for vertical complexity. Future research should thus analyze the extent to which network governance changes when networks show variations in terms of growth and diversity over time (Kenis & Provan, 2009).

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Chapter 2

Process performance and
network governance

Chapter 2: Process performance and network governance

Legitimacy, accordance and accountability within a lead organization-governed network

Abstract

We analyze the extent to which different governance roles adopted by network coordinators are able to enhance the process performance of lead organization-governed public-nonprofit networks of service organizations aiming to fight child poverty. We interviewed network coordinators and network participants from twelve local networks of service organizations in Flanders and Brussels, Belgium. We focus on three components to determine process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability within the network. Our results indicate that to enhance the process performance of the network, network coordinators need to adapt their governance roles according to the level of commitment, the diversity among the service organizations and the perceived trustworthiness of the leading agency in terms of negative or positive experiences of collaboration.

Keywords

Introduction

We focus on lead organization-governed public-nonprofit service networks addressing the complex problems of vulnerable target groups such as people living in poverty. In these networks the responsibility for network governance lies in the hands of one leading public organization (Stone & Ostrower, 2007; Provan & Milward, 1995; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Human & Provan, 2000; Graddy & Chen, 2006; Span et al., 2012a). In this study we focus on the extent to which the network coordinator affiliated to the leading public agency is able to enhance the process performance of the network (Voets et al., 2008).

A particularly important characteristic of public-nonprofit service networks is that they consist of a large diversity of service organizations with different backgrounds, expertise, perspectives and expectations towards the network. As one service organization is not able to deal with the 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Buck et al., 2011) of vulnerable target groups, the expertise of a diverse set of network actors is indispensable. As a result of this diversity among participating actors, these networks are challenged to achieve integration without losing the expertise of the diverse set of participating service agencies (Rosenheck et al., 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995; 2001, Milward & Provan, 2006: Provan & Kenis, 2008). In order to establish a well performing network that balances integration and differentiation adequate network governance is necessary (Provan & Kenis, 2008, Buck et al., 2011). Network governance can ensure that the network participants are dedicated to the network, that conflicts are addressed and that the necessary resources are obtained and distributed effectively among the participating network agencies (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In other words, the performance of networks is largely dependent upon the governance in these networks (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Klijn et al. 2010).

An important contribution to the research on lead organization-governed networks has been made by Span et al. (2012a), who argue that in these networks, the coordinators affiliated to the governing leading agency can adopt different roles. These governance roles can be placed on a continuum ranging from a bottom-up facilitator to a more steering top-down commissioner governance role.

In this study we analyze the extent to which each of these governance roles is able to enhance the process performance of public-nonprofit networks of service organizations aiming to fight child poverty. Process performance refers to the democratic quality of networks (De Rynck & Voets 2006; Voets et al., 2008) and is ingrained in the processes of policy making among network actors (Voets et al., 2008). Networks are multi-organizational, and therefore governance must be able to democratically guide a network by taking the different perspectives and the expertise of a diversity of network actors into account, while establishing a common goal. We use the framework of Voets et al., (2008) and study the process performance of networks by focusing on the extent to which Span et al.'s (2012b) different governance roles are able to enhance legitimacy, accordance and accountability (Voets et al., 2008). Legitimacy refers to the extent to which network coordinators are able to convince network actors that the network is worthwhile and provides advantages for their own organization. Accordance refers to the extent to which network coordinators are able to make decisions that rely on a high level of consent among network actors. Accountability refers to the extent to which network actors agree that it is necessary to hold the network coordinator accountable for his or her actions.

We follow Span et al. (2012b, p. 191), arguing that there is no "*universal best way to govern a network*" and that the process performance of networks depends on the particular characteristics of the network. Consequently, network coordinators should adapt their role according to specific network features in order to enhance the performance of the network. Using these insights as a starting point, this study analyzes how and under which circumstances different governance roles

within lead organization-governed networks are able to enhance the process performance of public-nonprofit networks of service organizations aiming to fight child poverty.

In order to meet this research goal, we conduct a qualitative research in which we interview network coordinators and network participants from twelve local networks of service organizations in Flanders and Brussels, Belgium. All of these networks are installed in the fight against child poverty on a local level.

This study makes a contribution to the literature in three ways. First, we contribute to studies that identify governance roles that are adopted by coordinators in lead organization-governed networks. We adopt a comparative perspective by including network cases governed by network coordinators who adopt different governance roles. Research on network governance mainly focuses on one type of network governance (Isett et al., 2011). As comparative research on this topic is scarce, our in-depth comparison of networks governed by different network coordinators improves our understanding of the performance of different governance roles and provides in-depth insights on how coordinating agencies could enhance process performance.

Second, we make a contribution to the framework introduced by Span et al. (2012b), who argue that in networks that aim to tackle complex problems with a high diversity of network actors, a facilitating coordinator fits best in order for the network to be successful. This facilitating coordinator makes no decisions on his or her own, but allows the network actors to make all decisions. In this chapter we question this hypothesis of Span et al. (2012b) and show that to enhance the process performance of a network, the coordinator needs to adapt its role according to different network characteristics.

Third, as most studies in this field primarily identify different types of governance roles (Rethemeyer, 2005; Span et al., 2012a; 2012b), we adopt an evaluative approach by focusing on how different governance roles are able to enhance process performance. By doing so, we contribute to the research on governance roles and we implement the idea of process performance into the network performance discussion (Voets et al. 2008). We also provide insights into the perceptions of the different network actors that are present in the network and that are confronted with the different governance roles that network coordinators can adopt.

In the following paragraph, we dive into the governance literature as we elaborate on the importance of governance, we discuss what can be defined as governance and how coordination translates into network practice. Using these insights, we make the connection with the research of Span et al. (2012a) by presenting their governance roles framework.

A second paragraph deals with the discussion on networks and performance measurements. Here, we argue that networks should be approached in a broader manner compared to single organizations, which also has implications on how performance should be measured. We use the framework of Voets et al. (2008) for assessing network performance. Afterwards, we zoom in on the methodology of the research, after which we present our results.

Governance of networks

Networks of nonprofit service organizations are challenged to find a level of network integration among a highly diverse set of service organizations (Rosenheck et al., 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995; 2001, Milward & Provan, 2006: Provan & Kenis, 2008; Klijn et al., 2010, Edelenbos et al., 2013). Provan and Kenis (2008, p. 230) define governance as "*the use of institutions and structures of authority and collaboration to allocate resources and to coordinate and control joint action across the network as a whole*".

Milward et al. (2009), Provan and Kenis (2008) and Huxham and Vangen (2005) emphasize the importance of governance in order for networks to achieve the desired outcomes in the complex interaction processes that characterize networks. In line with these developments, Provan and Kenis (2008) have developed a framework with three modes of network governance: a participant-governed network, a network administrative organization (NAO) and a lead organization-governed network. While networks that are installed by a federal or regional government to deal with wicked societal issues such as poverty and social exclusion are often lead organization-governed networks (Span et al., 2012a; 2012b), we focus on this type of network governance. According to Chen and Graddy (2010, p. 406) these lead organization-governed networks are often supported by "*public funding agencies* [that] *develop a single contracting relationship with a* [public] *lead organization and then encourage or mandate creation of a community-based network of service providers*" (Graddy & Chen, 2006; Poole, 2008; Johnston & Romzek, 2008; Chen, 2008; Provan & Kenis, 2008: all in Chen & Graddy, 2010). In a lead organization-governed network, as the term clearly indicates, there is one leading organization that governs the network. This organization provides services to the target group but also has the lead over the collaboration in the network.

As Provan and Kenis (2008, p. 230) put it, "*a critical role for governance is to monitor and control the behavior of management, who are hired to preside over the day-to-day activities*". Earlier research shows that lead organizations often install 'central mechanisms of control' (Provan & Milward, 1995; in Chen & Graddy, 2010, p. 412) in order to increase the performance of the network. This translates into the recruitment of one or more network coordinators.

Several researchers, such as Mandell (2001), Kickert et al. (1997) and Agranoff and McGuire (2003) have been interested in the roles that network coordinators can adopt in coordinating a network. In lead organization-governed networks these coordinators are hired by or affiliated to the leading organization. The governance roles that have been developed in literature represent different positions towards the network participants and the leading organization. Rethemeyer (2005) is arguably the first to emphasize the top-down – bottom-up continuum that exists regarding the roles that network coordinators can adopt when coordinating a network. In his book review, Rethemeyer (2005) argues that public coordinators can be positioned on a continuum between facilitator and maestro. Span et al. (2012a) further developed this distinction by identifying a typology of three different governance roles that can be placed on this continuum: the commissioner, the co-producer and the facilitator.

On the top-down end of the continuum, the network coordinator adopts the role of commissioner. The different network participants have limited input opportunities and the network coordinator can make unilateral decisions. Also, the network coordinator has the main responsibility and has to be able to account for the actions of the network.

On the other end of the continuum, the network coordinator can adopt the role of facilitator. His or her main goal is to facilitate the collaboration between the different network participants without intervening in the decision-making process. Here, the network coordinator's main job is to set up the meetings and support the collaboration, while the final decisions are made by the

network participants. These participants also have the main responsibility and take account for the actions of the network.

The role of the co-producer is situated between the top-down and bottom-up extremes. Here, the network coordinator and the network participants strive for a balanced collaboration, in which the network coordinator is seen as an equal partner alongside the other participants in the network. The decisions are made collectively, taking all participants, the network coordinator included, into account. Consequently, the ultimate responsibility rests with all network participants and the network coordinator, who all have to be able to take account for the network.

Span et al. (2012b) explain these roles in relation to different contingency factors or network features. They claim that "*how governance roles influence the performance of local public networks is assumed to depend on contingency factors*" (Span et al., 2012b, p. 186). In other words, there is "*no universal best way to govern a network*" (Span et al., 2012b, p. 191); the success of a certain role depends on a variety of network features. Span et al. (2012b) discern four: network size, the diversity of network members, degree of customizability of services, and the network evolution. They reason that in younger, bigger and/or more homogenous networks with low customizable services, a commissioner role will be more successful (Span et al., 2012b). On the other hand, in more mature networks that are smaller, more divers and/or that provide high customizable services, a facilitator role will be more successful (Span et al., 2012b). In this research, we zoom in on social support networks who deal with very diverse and complex demands from the target group (ranging from financial support and housing support to educational support). The fact that these demands are so complex, requires that the provided services are customized to the client (Span et al., 2012b). The available knowledge and resources need to be integrated by the coordinator to meet the complexity of these problems. Span et al. (2012b) argue that within this type of network, the coordinator needs to adopt a facilitating role that allows all the network members to be involved in the decision-making process and because of this, the expertise and knowledge can be shared and integrated to provide answers to these complex problems. In this study we draw further on this hypothesis and analyze the extent to which the three roles of Span et al. (2012a) - facilitators, co-producers and commissioners - are able to enhance the process performance of the network.

Network process performance

The prevailing assumption in network studies is that organizations that collaborate in networks are more effective at providing the necessary services compared to what they would be able to achieve independently (Provan & Milward, 2001). The study of effectiveness and performance has been problematic as terms such as 'performance' and 'effectiveness' often remain undefined. Literature on network performance makes a distinction between a narrow and a broad perspective on performance measurement. Scholars using a narrow perspective focus on very specific output or outcome indicators to assess whether the network is able to attain an increase in output or outcome (Voets et al., 2008; Hood, 1991). Voets et al. (2008) problematize this narrow perspective of network performance which assumes that an organization or a network is effective "*when it attains predetermined goals*", and in doing this, "*maximizes outputs and minimizes inputs*" (Voets et al., 2008, p. 775). Voets et al. (2008) refer to this as production performance.

Although the importance of production performance within networks should not be underemphasized – it remains important that networks are effective and that they strive to reach the predetermined goals –, this narrow approach on the study of network performance is criticized in several ways. An important view is provided by Provan and Milward (2001). According to their perspective, a narrow approach does not take into account the fact that networks consist of different stakeholders and that each of these actors has a different perspective

on network effectiveness. Provan and Milward (2001) therefore put forward a multi-level assessment of performance by focusing on the key question: 'effectiveness for whom?' showing that network performance should be assessed at different levels and using the perspective of multiple stakeholders of the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 229; Provan & Milward, 2001). In this line of reasoning, Voets et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of a broader approach of network governance. They argue, in addition to the approach of Provan and Milward (2001), that networks should be judged by the extent to which principles such as fairness, democracy and the robustness of the network are taken into account. Voets et al. (2008) therefore specifically emphasize the concepts of process performance and regime performance in addition to a narrow outcome-oriented approach on the study of network performance. Regime performance concerns the robustness and resilience of a network. It takes into account whether a network is robust enough to deal with issues such as the loss of network members or the lack of financial means. Process performance focuses on the process of governance by looking into the levels of trust and entitlement that bring along success or failure in the network (Voets et al., 2008). More specifically, Voets et al. (2008) state that process performance refers to three components: legitimacy, accountability and accordance.

The first component, legitimacy, can be broken down into internal and external legitimacy (Milward & Provan, 2006; Human & Provan, 2000). External legitimacy concerns the network's efforts to depict the interests of network participants to outside groups (Human & Provan, 2000). When network participants perceive the network as successful in terms of valuable results, they will be more committed to the network. Internal legitimacy in lead organization-governed networks thus reflects "*the willingness or commitment of individuals, groups and organisations to engage with the initiative once high-level decisions makers have assured its creation*" (Skelcher et al., 2008, p. 218). Provan and Milward (2001, p. 416) state that internal legitimacy is highly related to "*member commitment to network goals*".

A second component of process performance is accordance, which refers to the status of consent within the network, which issues are offered for consent and the mechanisms that are available to give consent (Skelcher et al., 2008; in Voets et al., 2008). Skelcher et al. (2008, p. 219) define accordance as the level to which network participants "*are able to exercise voice and judgement concerning the proposals, policies and decisions*" of the network. In this research, we focus on the extent to which the network coordinator is able to make decisions that are based on consent and which role he or she adopts to reach this consent. More specifically, accordance within this research relates to the extent to which the network actors perceive that the coordinator is able to reach consent based decisions and which role he or she uses to reach this consensus. Much research has confirmed that the level of consent among network participants positively influences the smooth collaboration in the network (Van de Ven, 1976; Provan & Kenis, 2008). When a network is able to reach consent based decisions, the participants are often more involved and committed to the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008). When the network does not succeed in reaching a consensus, this can negatively influence the effectiveness and the smooth collaboration of the network (Ziviani et al., 2013; Harker et al., 2004; Statham, 2011).

The third and final component of process performance is accountability, which Edwards and Hulme (1996, p. 967) describe as "*the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority and are held responsible for their actions*". Here, accountability refers to opportunities for communication and feedback between the network participants and the network coordinator (Koliba et al., 2011). Accountability structures arise together with structures of interdependency between the network actors who ask for account and those who have to give account (Koliba et al., 2011). In lead organization-governed networks, it is mostly the lead organization that is being held accountable by the network participants (Ran & Qi, 2017; Provan

& Kenis, 2008; Chen & Graddy, 2010). Accountability within lead organization networks thus refers to whether the network participants are able to hold the leading organization accountable for the actions and the functioning of the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

These three dimensions of network performance (production, regime and process performance) are all interconnected and are all important criteria for the general assessment of a network. In this research however, we zoom in on process performance. We follow Kenis and Provan (2009) who state that performance criteria should be based on the developmental stage of the network. We zoom in on networks that are still in the early stages of development. Kenis and Provan (2009) indicate that production performance will be problematic when a network is still in the early stages of development, as the network will predominantly focus on developing network structures and processes instead of goal attainment. For this reason, we decide to focus on process performance of a network as it is a good way to assess lead organization-governed networks that are still developing, in full expansion or evolution, which is the case for our selected research cases. Our network cases are thus relevant to investigate the extent to which network governance is able to increase process performance

We study how different governance roles are able to enhance the process performance of a lead organization-governed network in terms of legitimacy, accordance and accountability. In order to do so, we more specifically assess which governance roles should be adopted to enhance the three abovementioned components of process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability (Skelcher et al., 2008; Voets et al., 2008). In what follows, we conceptualize and elaborate on how we approach this methodologically.

Methodology

Case selection

As our research focuses on the perceived process performance of different governance roles in networks, we selected twelve networks of nonprofit service organizations. In a first phase, we selected these twelve networks out of a large pool of over 160 Flemish and Brussels networks. These networks have the common assignment to fight child poverty on a local level, but show large variation in terms of target population, network participants and network actions. As already argued above, we selected networks governed by a lead organization. This lead organization is very often the local government, the municipality and/or the Public Center for Social Welfare.

We applied a purposive sampling method (Yin, 2014) in order to make a representative selection out of these 160 networks. This sampling method allows us not only to meet our research aim, but to get insight into the social processes of a given context (Bryman, 2001; Yin, 2014). In this research, our aim is to comprehend which network characteristics impact the process performance of different governance roles according to the perceptions of both the network coordinator and the network participants. The purposive sampling method allows us to advance our understanding of the context in which network coordinators govern nonprofit service networks, in our case the Flemish and Brussels context of nonprofit service networks. Although these findings cannot be generalized, we argue that they could offer a better insight into several other types of networks and how these networks are governed.

We sampled our research cases based on four relevant criteria. First, the Public Center for Social Welfare has to be one of the network actors. Due to the way local service networks are funded in Belgium, the Public Center for Social Welfare is often encouraged to become the leading applicant and is therefore often (one of) the leading organization(s) in the network. Also, the Public Center for Social Welfare is present in every municipality and is the most established welfare organization on the local level. The presence of this organization is important in order to create a first accordance among the different selected networks.

Second, the networks, as well as the nonprofit service organizations that are part of the network, have to work with families with children in poverty. By including this criterion, we exclude all networks that work exclusively with adults without involving the children in the network process.

A third criterion to which the selected networks have to comply, is that they have to consist of a set of autonomous nonprofit service organizations. This means that they cannot merge into one single, new organization which is the network. The collaboration between independent organizations is the key characteristic of a network.

A fourth and last criterion that was included, regards the child poverty rate in the municipality. This rate has to be higher than average in order for the network of that municipality to be part of the selection. The child poverty rates are published by the Flemish childcare organization 'Kind & Gezin' (Child & Family), the municipalities that rated a score of 4 out of 7 or more on the child deprivation scale were selected. For the Brussels networks, a similar scale was used.

In order to make a representative selection of networks that have the right amount of differentiation and similarities, we contacted several networks to get the required information. Subsequently, twelve networks were selected and considered relevant for our research. Table 5 gives an overview of the most important characteristics of the selected networks.

Network	Number of network coordinators (interviewed)	Number of participants (interviewed)	Provided services
A	1 (1)	15 (10)	Events and information sessions for professionals and target group
B	2 (2)	10 (9)	Courses for target group and material support through the network's second hand store
C	2 (2)	6 (6)	Long-term support trajectories for families in poverty, parent support groups and poverty awareness trainings for professionals
D	2 (2)	30 (10)	Creating an accessible and adjusted entrance to the local services, and creating a platform in order to make recommendations towards the federal government
E	1 (1)	26 (10)	Meeting and getting to know the other local actors and facilitating and optimizing the referral system
F	2 (2)	13 (8)	Meeting and getting to know the other local actors and creating common initiatives for the target group
G	2 (2)	10 (7)	The creation of a pool of family coaches who offer long term support trajectories on several domains
H	2 (2)	23 (13)	Getting to know the different local actors and creating a platform in order to make recommendations towards the federal government
I	1 (1)	22 (12)	Information exchange between -, and information sessions for professionals with a focus on making the bridge between welfare and education
J	1 (1)	10 (5)	Getting to know the different local actors and exchanging information
K	1 (1)	17 (13)	Getting to know the different local actors and initiating several common projects for the target group
L	2 (2)	44 (10)	Improving the visibility and the accessibility of the local services, improving the referral system, getting to know the different local actors and creating common projects

Table 5: Network characteristics[1]

Qualitative interviews

We conducted qualitative interviews with the network coordinators and the network participants in order to get insight into the perceived process performance of the different governance roles within the network and the components that impact this performance. First of all, we interviewed the lead organization and the network coordinator of each network in order to get the required general information about the network such as which participants are involved, the vision and the

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[1] Based on Table 2 in Chapter 1

goal of the network etc. But more importantly, we identified which role the network coordinator adopts according to him or her: the role of facilitator, co-producer or commissioner.

Secondly, we interviewed the network participants. In order to do that, the network coordinator pointed out the organizations he or she had the most contact with. Besides this, we also interviewed some participants that were not put forward by the network coordinator to avoid a potential bias. During these interviews, we got more insight into how the participants perceived the coordination role and the process performance of the different governance roles.

We developed semi-structured questionnaires as guidance through these interviews. In these questionnaires, we focus on (1) the governance role of the network coordinator and (2) the process performance of this role as perceived by the network coordinator and the network participants. In order to operationalize the measurement of process performance, we focus on several aspects that are present in a collaboration, such as establishing a vision, network goals, the recruitment of possible network participants, etc. Also, we take the three components of process performance (Skelcher et al., 2008) into account. (a) Legitimacy: do the network actors feel as if they are supported in the collaboration, and do they themselves support the collaboration? (b) Accordance: are the decisions that are made based on consent? (c) Accountability: are the right actors being held accountable for the network functioning?

The respondents were encouraged to illustrate their responses with examples of day to day situations and other examples. These interviews gave us insight into the perceptions of the different network actors concerning process performance of these different governance roles under different circumstances. Table 5 presents more information about the number of network coordinators and network participants that were interviewed.

All of the interviews were fully transcribed and coded using NVivo-Software. First we used the open coding method, after which we switched to the axial coding process (Berg, 1989). By using axial coding, we grouped the different open codes into categories and sub-categories based on the previous three subdivisions.

To enhance the face validity of our data gathering process and the research in general, we introduced some additional measures. By doing this, we want to make sure that our research measures reflect what they intend to measure (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004). First, a codebook was developed in close collaboration between the two researchers who work on this project. The codebook was updated after each interview that was analyzed and after every step in the coding process. This resulted in a codebook that is straightforward and unambiguous.

Another aspect that enhanced face validity is the high number of interviews that was conducted in each research case. By interviewing both the network coordinator(s) and several network participants, we answer to the two hats problem that is identified by Milward (2017). In researching a network, we should not only question the network coordinator or one network participant. The source of data should contain a number of coordinators or participants to get a more nuanced view of the collaboration. Otherwise, we face a problem with the unit of analysis and the extrapolation of the data. To prevent this, we selected a large number of network participants and when possible more than one network coordinator in each network. We also made sure that the selected respondents reflected the diversity of the network. We pursued a good balance between the perceptions of the network coordinators and the network participants.

Results: the perceived process performance of networks with different governance roles

A first important finding is that the three governance roles are all represented in the selected networks of our study. Three network coordinators adopt the role of facilitator, five the role of co-producer, and four the role of commissioner. We used the criteria of Span et al. (2012a) to determine which role is adopted by the network coordinators. We more specifically focus on the role of the coordinator when formulating the network vision and goals, the monitoring and evaluation of the network, the division of responsibility within the network, the decision-making process and the division of power within the network. Table 6 gives an overview of the governance roles in the researched network cases.

Network	Governance role [2]
A	Facilitator
B	Co-producer
C	Commissioner
D	Co-producer
E	Commissioner
F	Co-producer
G	Commissioner
H	Facilitator
I	Co-producer
J	Commissioner
K	Facilitator
L	Co-producer

Table 6: Governance roles in the researched networks

Legitimacy within the network

As already mentioned above, internal legitimacy in lead organization-governed networks reflects the extent to which the network is able to convince network actors that it will produce favorable results. Participants who experience a significant added value from the network for their own organization are highly committed to play an important role in the decision-making process. They want to invest time and want the perspective of their organization to be taken into account in the development of the network. In one of the networks, for example, we find that the network participants show a high level of commitment due to the added value that they experience in their network. The participant, who is quoted below, indicates that the network has the capacity to undertake certain actions that the organization does not have the capacity to do on its own. One of the main tasks that the organization wants to achieve, is to contact all families with children in the municipality. This respondent however argues that his organization does not have the capacity to do this amount of work, as they only work with volunteers who have too little time.

> "*The network focusses on children from 0 to 36 months, which also has a practical advantage for us.* [...] *How do we recruit members for our own organization? 150 children are being born each year in our municipality.* [...] *We are all volunteers, a lot of people work during the day, so it's too big of a job to try to visit all these families.*" (Participant Network B)

This organization benefits from the network and thus experiences a high level of added value as a result of their involvement in the network. An important finding is that participants who are highly committed to the network accept that the coordinator adopts a facilitating or coproducing role. The below quoted participant confirms that this is a good way of working as he wants to be involved and keep track of the network. At the same time he also accepts the fact that the

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[2] based on Span et al., 2012a

coordinator has more time to invest in the network and thus wants to have a say during the network meetings.

> "*It's not a one-way street, she doesn't steer everything. She manages things, but the partners get a lot of say in the collaboration. And that is the best way according to me, I don't see how we could improve this*" (Participant Network B)

This respondent thus experiences a high level of network legitimacy as the network is very convenient for his own organization, which positively influences the commitment towards the network. Additionally, our results show that participants who are more committed, often also want to be more involved in the decision-making process. Consequently, according to our respondents, a coproducing or facilitating network coordinator is the preferred governance role as these governance roles allow for participants and the network coordinator to make decisions together, with equal input opportunities.

In other networks, we found that the participants did not always perceive the network activities as a significant contribution to their own organization. The incentives for participation in these networks are very diverse, ranging from 'being obliged to participate' to 'because it's the right thing to do'. The participants that are involved for these reasons but do not really invest time in the network, can be labelled as 'free riders' (Milward & Provan, 2006). They are part of the network but they do not show a lot of involvement and they do not actively contribute to the collaboration, which has a negative impact on the internal legitimacy of the network. These participants are not convinced of the added value that the network creates for their own organization. Because of this, they do not prioritize the network and some participants have dropped out.

We observe this finding very clearly in some of the selected networks where the participants do not invest the necessary time to actively get involved in the network and be present in all the network meetings. Our interviews show that in these networks the meetings tend to be more chaotic. The different network participants do not know each other and are not aware of the planned network activities and the decisions that were already made. As a result, network members do not gain confidence that the network is going to produce favorable results. The network legitimacy is thus conceived as very low. In terms of Provan and Kenis (2008) we could emphasize that these networks suffer from a lack of internal stability. Network participants come and go. New representatives continue to show up for every meeting. Network coordinators are not able to communicate with a stable set of participants.

In these networks where commitment was low and network coordinators perceived a lack of internal stability among the participating actors, the latter emphasized that they felt the need to adopt a commissioner role as the participants do not have the time nor are they willing to actively get involved in the decision-making process. This lack of time is compensated by the network coordinator who adopts a steering role and has the ability to make decisions. This insight was supported by the findings in one of our cases where the network coordinator initially adopted a facilitating role. Early on in the network process, she realized that the participants did not have a lot of time to invest in the network. Because of this lack of time and the lack of a steering governance role, the network did not progress the way it should have. The network coordinator then decided to adopt a more steering role in order to make the necessary decisions and steer the network in the right direction.

> "*After a while, I felt like 'ok, we have a majority, let's push it through', because otherwise, we would have been stuck and nothing would have happened.*" (Coordinator Network A)

We could thus say, based on the insights of the network coordinators and the network participants, that a facilitating role would, in this case, not lead to high levels of legitimacy as the network would not be able to move forward.

We can conclude that if network participants are highly committed to the network, a governance role as co-producer will lead to higher levels of legitimacy as network participants want to, and are able to provide input based on their specific expertise. Here, the network participants and the network coordinator are able to make the necessary decisions together. On the other hand, a governance role as commissioner leads to a higher level of internal legitimacy if the network participants initially do not experience high levels of commitment. The fact that the network participants in these kinds of networks are less committed requires for a network coordinator who makes the necessary decisions in order for the network to move forward and to not be stuck in indecisiveness.

Accordance within the network

The second component of process performance that is defined by Skelcher et al. (2008) is accordance or the status of consent that is present in a network, which mechanisms for consent are available and which issues are offered for consent (Voets et al., 2008). In this research, we zoom in on the extent to which the coordinator is able to reach consent based decisions and which role he or she best adopts to reach this consent.

The ability to which the coordinator is able to reach consent based decisions, positively influences process performance of the network (Van de Ven, 1976; Provan & Kenis, 2008). A network can consists of very diverse participants who have different target groups, who are more generalist or specialist, who are active in different sectors, etc. This diversity can cause differences in opinion when it comes to making decisions. The more diverse the network, the bigger the differences between the network participants generally are and the harder it is to make consented decisions (Span et al., 2012b). When a consensus can however be reached among the network participants, they often become more involved and committed towards the network (Provan & Kenis, 2008), which positively influences the process performance.

In a network that is characterized by a large diversity of network participants, we found that the initial facilitating role that the network coordinator adopted, did not match up to this diversity. In this network, different sectors were represented, the participants spoke two different languages (Dutch and French) and furthermore, we found a lot of different insights and priorities. The network coordinator describes how she found out that the participants have very different ideas about the network goals:

> "*There were very different ideas in the beginning. At a certain point in time, I said to my chef: 'how is it possible that you all got together?* […]*'. There were partners that wanted to really focus on parenting support, others wanted to focus on healthy food, others wanted to create a garden with vegetables etc. Those ideas were really very diverse.*" (Coordinator Network A)

Because of these differences, a facilitating governance role was perceived as too lenient and did not lead to a consensus regarding the vision, goals and future direction of the network. The network coordinator in this network picked up on this lack of direction, and decided to adopt a governance role as commissioner.

> "*The advantage* [of the network] *was that everyone was able to collaborate and that the participants didn't feel absorbed by the big structure of* [the Public Center for Social Welfare]*. The disadvantage was that it was difficult to manage because at a certain moment, decisions had to be made to make sure that the network progressed. At some moment,*

someone has to say 'we're going to do it that way, and you're going to participate'. They warned me that trying to be democratic was going to be difficult, and it's true." (Coordinator Network J)

This role led to a higher level of accordance in this diverse network in order to make the necessary decisions. By taking control and by making these decisions, the network could move forward, which was also appreciated by the network participants. In this case, a commissioner was best able to reach a decision that is based on consent.

In another network, the diversity among the network participants was much smaller, which made it easier for the coordinator to come to consent based decisions without adopting a steering role as these participants were able to reach a consensus among themselves more easily. In this case, a facilitating or coproducing role led to higher levels of accordance. In this case, the network coordinator ought it possible to come to a consensus by adopting a bottom-up role and stimulated more input from the network participants. Because of this, the network coordinator did not feel obliged to adopt a commissioner role.

We can conclude that the higher the diversity among the network participants, the more the coordinator feels compelled to adopt a commissioner role in order to reach consent among these network participants. A commissioner role will thus lead to higher levels of accordance in networks with a high level of diversity.

When the diversity among network participants is however smaller, the coordinator can adopt a facilitating role and still reach a decent level of consent among the network participants. Here, a facilitating role will lead to higher levels of accordance in networks that are characterized by a small level of diversity.

Accountability within the network

The third component of process performance that is defined by Skelcher et al. (2008) is accountability. When different organizations collaborate in a network, the question of who is held accountable and who takes accountability over the network, is often a central concern. Several mechanisms for accountability can be installed in networks, such as feedback loops between network participants and the network coordinator, evaluation sessions, etc. (Voets et al., 2008; Koliba et al., 2011). Accountability within lead organization networks refers to whether the network participants are able to hold the lead organization accountable for the actions and the functioning of the network. Our findings show that the extent to which network participants think that the leading organization must be held accountable for its actions, is highly related to the level of trustworthiness that the participants have regarding the leading organization. Our respondents emphasize that the accountability of the leading organization is important when the leading organization only focuses on its own interests, without protecting the collective interests of the network. Our findings also affirm that the trustworthiness is dependent on past experiences with the leading organization, which has also been confirmed by Granovetter (1985); Gulati (1995) and Provan et al. (2009) who state that the level of trustworthiness of one (leading) actor is often related to the direct experiences the other network actors had with this (leading) actor in the past.

In some of the selected networks, the network participants have had several negative experiences in collaborating with the leading organization. For example, several of the participants have experienced that their clients are not supported accordingly by the leading organization. In one network, the leading organization - the Public Center for Social Welfare - is concerned with the provision of financial support and has a negative reputation in the network. A number of the participants in this networks are convinced that their clients should receive certain benefits, but the leading organization refuses to provide these benefits. Because of these negative past

experiences, the network participants distrust the leading organization. They presume that this leading organization will prioritize its own interests instead of the general network interests and that it will appropriate the network successes as its own successes. Even the coordinator of this network is aware of this bad reputation:

> *"The Public Center for Social Welfare has a very bad reputation. During several of the interviews, there was a lot of bashing on the organization. It's better to say that you are the coordinator of the network then to say that you work for the Public Center for Social Welfare."* (Coordinator Network A)

In these networks, the network coordinator is often perceived as the puppet who is appointed by the leading organization and who executes the demands of this leading organization. This negative history of collaboration leads to a situation in which the network participants do not feel comfortable with a commissioner role as this role can be inflicted by the leading organization. In these networks the participants emphasize that the leading organizations should adopt a facilitating role which will increase the possibilities for the network participants to hold the leading agency accountable for its actions. In the following quote one of our respondents expresses his concern about the Public Center for Social Welfare being the leading agency.

> *"That's always the question. Why is it the Public Center for Social Welfare who is occupied with the formation of the network? What are you going to take from us, what are you going to steal?"* (Participant Network H)

In this case, the network participants express their desire for a more participative governance role for the network coordinator. The installation of a facilitating or coproducing network coordinator can enhance the opportunity for the participants to hold the leading organization accountable, which enhances the overall accountability of the network, i.e. that the actors who have to take accountability do so, and that the actors who give accountability can do so.

In another network, the history of collaboration was more positive. Here, there was a long informal collaborative history between the leading organization and several of the network participants. These participants indicate that their trust towards the leading organization has increased over the years. Because of this positive history of collaboration, the participants accept that the network coordinator, who is appointed by the leading organization, adopts a role as commissioner. In this network the participants allow the leading agency to make decisions without consulting the network. As there is a lot of trust between the network participants and the leading organization, they assume that the leading organization will hold itself accountable for the network actions. The participants thus feel less need to address the lead organization to act accountable, as they perceive that the leading organization will hold itself accountable while adopting a commissioner role

We can conclude that when the relationship or history of collaboration is not perceived as positive, the trustworthiness of the leading agency is very low and a governance role as facilitator or co-producer will lead to higher levels of accountability and thus process performance. The network participants would not accept a more steering governance role, out of fear that the leading organization – which they do not trust - would have too much power without taking accountability for the network. The installation of a facilitating network coordinator can, in this case, be seen as a mechanism to enhance the accountability.

When, however, a network has a positive history of collaboration, we can say that a commissioner role will lead to the necessary levels of accountability as the participants have enough trust towards the network coordinator and the leading organization as to making the right decisions and holding themselves accountable.

Conclusion & Discussion

The governance of public-nonprofit networks has been the focal point of many papers and studies (see, for example Klijn et al., 2010, Span et al., 2012b; Edelenbos et al., 2013). Several studies illustrate the significance of network management for the functioning of the network (Klijn et al., 2010). Network coordinators are hired to bring participants together, to initiate and facilitate interaction among participants, to explore new ideas and to exchange expertise and information (Edelenbos, et al., 2013; Rogers & Whetten, 1982; Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004; Gage & Mandell, 1990; Burt, 2004). In this research, we studied the extent to which different governance roles adopted by network coordinators are able to increase the process performance of networks (Voets et al., 2008).

Previous research by Span et al. (2012a) identified three governance roles: a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator. We focused on the extent to which each of these governance roles is able to increase legitimacy, accordance and accountability within a network (Skelcher et al., 2008; Voets et al., 2008). First of all, we found that when network participants experience high levels of commitment, a coproducing or facilitating governance role will lead to higher levels of legitimacy. As these network participants are committed to invest time in the network, they will experience higher levels of internal legitimacy when they have the opportunity to provide input in the decision-making process. On the other hand, when network participants experience less added value for their own organization and are thus less committed to the network, a network coordinator who adopts a commissioner role will lead to higher levels of legitimacy. In this case, the network participants invest little time in the network and do not feel the urge to, for example, provide input and participate at network meetings. In these networks, the network coordinator needs to make the necessary decisions for the network to move forward and to eventually enhance the internal legitimacy.

Second, we found that when participants have fairly similar backgrounds, experiences and expertise, they are better able to reach consent on decisions in order for the network to move forward. In this case, the network coordinator only has to support this process by adopting a facilitating or coproducing role, which will lead to a high level of accordance within the network. On the other hand, when network participants are very diverse and when they are not able to reach the necessary levels of consensus, we find that a commissioner role will lead to higher levels of accordance. In this case, the network coordinator can step up and search for consent to enhance the accordance within the network. In chapter 3 we elaborate on the important practice of synthesis as an effective way to reach consensus among a differentiated set of network participants.

The third and final finding of this research is that the positive or negative history of collaboration has an influence on the governance roles that network coordinators can adopt to enhance the accountability within the network. We find that within networks where the relationship between the network participants and the lead organization is characterized by a negative history of collaboration, the network coordinator should adopt a facilitating or coproducing governance role in order for the network to achieve higher levels of accountability. In these networks, the network participants do not trust the leading organization and the affiliated network coordinator. They fear that the leading organization and the network coordinator might make too many unilateral decisions without taking full responsibly for these decisions. To enhance the overall accountability within the network, the network participants want to have opportunities to influence the decision-making process in the network, which can be created by a facilitating or coproducing network coordinator. On the other hand, when the network is characterized by a positive history of collaboration, the network participants trust the leading organization to take

full responsibility for the decisions that are made in the network. In this case, a commissioner role will lead to the required levels of accountability.

With this research, we thus provide evidence for the fact that there is no "*universal best way to govern a network*" of service organizations (Span et al., 2012b, p. 191). Network coordinators might have to adopt different governance roles in different networks, or even different governance roles towards different network participants in the same network. With these findings, we contradict research by McGuire (2006) and Andrews et al. (2009) who assume that certain governance roles are better able to reach the predetermined network goals than others. Besides this, we complement the research by Span et al. (2012b) by zooming in on the process performance of networks, a focus that has been taken up too little in past research.

Our results lead us to explore future paths of research and to acknowledge a number of unaddressed issues. First of all, a network is characterized by very different network participants. Within the same network, some network participants might be highly committed while others are not committed to the network at all. Some network participants might have a positive history of collaboration, while others have a negative history of collaboration with the leading organization. This means that, within the same network, a network coordinator might have to adopt a different governance role towards different network participants to enhance the process performance of the network. Future research should zoom in more on the different features that characterize these network participants and how they can be aligned more.

Secondly, future research should focus more on the balance between production performance, process performance and regime performance. Voets et al. (2008) point out that only focusing on process performance does not necessarily lead to good outcomes, and that "*while process performance* [of a network] *might be high, the production performance might be close to zero*" (Voets et al., 2008, p. 785). Future research on the assessment of public-nonprofit networks should thus join process and production performance, while also taking regime performance into account.

Lastly, we want to emphasize that research and networks often put too much emphasis on the level of goal consensus that is established within a network. Raeymaeckers et al. (2017) already showed that goal consensus among network participants is often difficult to establish and - especially in very diverse networks - should not be considered as the most important "*requirement for success*" (Vangen & Huxham, 2013, p. 55). They state that in networks where consensus or accordance is hard to achieve, the network coordinator holds an important responsibility in ensuring the functioning of the network by "*carefully establishing a sufficient level of goal consensus while at the same time taking into account the diversity among network actors*" (Raeymaeckers et al., 2017, p. 6). In this research, we found that in case of a lack of goal consensus, the coordinator should adopt a commissioner role in order for the network to move forward. We recommend that future research should focus on the commissioner role and the implications this role has on the production and regime performance and on different collaborative network aspects such as the perceived autonomy of the network participants.

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Chapter 3

Comparing three types of Governance roles within Public-Nonprofit service networks

Chapter 3: Comparing three types of Governance roles within Public-Nonprofit service networks

Abstract

In this research, we focus on the governance role of the coordinator affiliated to the leading agency in public–nonprofit service networks. We analyze the extent to which different types of coordinators are able to build consensus on a set of network goals in close collaboration with the nonprofit network partners. We explore three network cases, respectively, coordinated by a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator. Both network coordinators and respondents from participating nonprofit service agencies are interviewed. In contrast to earlier studies our analysis indicates that, in comparison with a facilitator, a commissioner and a co-producer are better equipped to reach consensus on a set of goals in service networks. The practice of synthesis is considered as very important when establishing consensus in a network.

Keywords

Introduction

Researchers and administrators increasingly emphasize the important role of networks that join efforts of a large variety of nonprofit service organizations to address the complex problems of vulnerable target groups. Provan and Milward (2001) define these networks as 'service delivery vehicles' providing value to a population confronted with varying needs, in ways that could not be achieved by a single organization. In this paper, we analyze the role of the network coordinator in establishing goal consensus in lead organization-governed public–nonprofit networks. These networks consist of local public and nonprofit organizations that provide services to people in their community. The local public agency acts as the lead organization of the network and is responsible for the network's governance. In this responsibility, public authorities typically appoint a coordinator to assist the leading public actor in governing the network. Hence, the coordinator is considered as an important governing actor in these networks (Provan & Kenis 2008; Edelenbos et al. 2013). Research on network governance is rather rare in the nonprofit literature (Renz & Andersson 2014). We extend current research by focusing on lead organization-governed public–nonprofit networks and analyzing the role of the coordinator in these networks.

An important challenge for the network coordinator is to integrate the joined efforts of a variety of service organizations (Rosenheck et al. 1998; Provan & Milward 1995; Raeymaeckers 2015; Raeymaeckers & Kenis 2016). When a network addresses the 'wicked issues' (Rittel & Webber 1973; Buck et al. 2011) of very complex and vulnerable target groups, the expertise of a diverse set of network actors becomes necessary. In order to pursue its goal, the network needs to achieve a certain 'unity in effort' by integrating the efforts of the diverse set of participating organizations. To establish this unity in effort, a consensus among the diverse network actors on the network goal is considered as crucial (Provan & Kenis 2008; Kenis & Provan 2009; Span et al. 2012a). Such consensus is, however, difficult to establish (Vangen & Huxham 2012). When a very diverse set of network actors participate, conflicts often arise and consensus on network goals is very difficult to reach (Span et al. 2012b). Hence, we argue that scientific evidence is necessary to better understand how the coordinator affiliated to the leading public agency can establish goal consensus in lead organization-governed public–nonprofit networks.

We analyze three networks where the coordinator affiliated to the leading public agency, respectively, adopts one out of three different governance roles: a facilitator, a co-producer and a commissioner (Span et al. 2012a). The networks of our study aim to provide services to families with children in poverty. As these families struggle with very diverse problems on different life domains, network coordinators need to connect with organizations with different kinds of expertise to provide an answer to the complex problems of their clients. Span et al. (2012b) put forward the claim that a facilitating governance role is very effective in these networks. In this chapter we empirically investigate this proposition. We use a qualitative research approach to analyze the perceptions of network participants about the goal-setting process and the governance role adopted by the network coordinator. In our analysis the network coordinator is a representative from the leading agency, responsible for the governance of the network.

Our study makes a contribution to the scientific literature in three ways. First, we answer the call of Stone and Ostrower (2007) to build further on the literature on public governance to offer useful insights and conceptual tools to provide a better understanding about how public–nonprofit networks should be governed. Despite the fact that many nonprofit governance scholars have emphasized the importance of networks (Cornforth 2012; Renz & Andersson 2014) and public–nonprofit partnerships (Gazley & Brudney 2007; Salamon & Toepler 2015; Brandson &

Pape 2015), empirical research on the governance of networks is very scarce in the field of nonprofit governance (Cairns & Harris 2011; Cornforth et al. 2014; Stone et al. 2010, 2014). In contrast, most scholars on nonprofit governance have mainly focused on governance of single organizations and consider the board as the main focus of analysis (Cornforth 2012; Ostrower & Stone 2006; Stone & Ostrower 2007). Our analysis adopts a network approach by focusing on the governance of the whole network of nonprofit and public organizations. We more specifically improve scientific insights by using the typology of Span et al. (2012a) to analyze the governance of lead organization-governed networks consisting of both public and nonprofit organizations.

Second, this approach allows us to compare different networks governed by different types of coordinators. As comparative research on this topic is very scarce (Isett et al. 2011), our in-depth comparison of three networks governed by different types of coordinators improves the understanding on the performance of different governance roles and provides in-depth insights on how coordinating agencies could and should be involved in the goal-setting process to reach a consensus among the different network actors.

Third, our multi-stakeholder approach allows us to provide a clear image of the perceptions that different stakeholders have regarding the way the network is governed or as Span et al. (2012a, 1191) put it, 'to flesh out the perceptions and rationales for the governance roles adopted and how they are operationalized.' As stakeholders can have very different needs and preferences, very different access to resources, and maintain very different goals (Balser & McClusky 2005), their expectations toward the role of the coordinator can be different. Our multi-stakeholder perspective is particularly important for networks of nonprofit and public service agencies. We emphasize that any analysis on network governance of service networks should shed light on the perspective of participating nonprofit service agencies, on how according to their view the network must be governed. Therefore, our study complements earlier studies by explicitly making a distinction between perceptions of coordinators and perceptions of network actors. This approach allows us to provide an in-depth analysis on how network governance can be more effectively established in everyday practice.

Goal Consensus and Network Governance

In their seminal article, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) introduced differentiation and integration as the key challenges for the functioning of modern organizations. They emphasize that the more differentiated an organization is, the more integrated its parts must be in order to perform effectively. A similar reasoning can be applied to networks of organizations as this is very common to the challenges networks of organizations are confronted with (Provan & Milward 1995). As argued above, the networks we study presuppose a differentiated set of organizations to collaborate in order to achieve results (Lawrence & Lorsch 1967; Buck et al. 2011). In many studies the focus lies on goal-directed networks, often consisting of three or more organizations collaborating to fulfill a common goal (Provan & Kenis 2008).

The literature states that in order to integrate the efforts of a diverse set of nonprofit organizations, a consensus must be established among participants on the joint goals of the network. Many scholars argue that goal consensus allows participants to perform better and will positively influence the smooth collaboration in the network (Van de Ven 1976; Provan & Kenis 2008). More specifically, when a consensus is established, network participants are more likely to be involved and committed to the network and more likely to work together (Provan & Kenis 2008). When a consensus is lacking, this will negatively influence the smooth collaboration and effectiveness of the network (Ziviani et al. 2013; Harker et al. 2004; Statham 2011). Studies, however, show that consensus on the joint network goals is dependent on the level of congruency that can be established between the organizational goals of network participants and the joint network goals at the collaborative level (Vangen & Huxham 2012). For obvious reasons, we can state that consensus is easy to establish in networks with a high level of congruency. In these networks the diversity among network actors is often very low and the joint network goals perfectly align with the organizational goals of all network participants.

However, Vangen and Huxham (2012) emphasize that when networks aim to tackle very complex and wicked issues, the expertise of a diverse set of organizations becomes indispensable. These diverse networks are confronted with low levels of congruency when trying to include the expertise of a diverse set of organizational actors to reach the joint goal of the network (Vangen & Huxham 2012). As a result, goal consensus is difficult to establish and conflicts can appear resulting from a lack of alignment between the joint network goals and the organizational goals of the network participants (Agranoff & McGuire 2001). We argue that in these networks the management of diversity is an important and continuous challenge for network governance (Vangen & Huxham 2012). Some authors, however, argue that consensus is often too difficult or even impossible to establish (Vangen & Huxham 2012). For this reason, these authors state that goal consensus must not be considered as an important 'requirement for success' (Vangen & Huxham 2012:757). In this chapter we agree that in very diverse networks, a high level of network consensus can be impossible to reach. However, in line with the abovementioned studies emphasizing the important role of goal consensus on joint network goals (Van de Ven 1976; Ziviani et al. 2013; Harker et al. 2004; Statham 2011), we argue that when no consensus is possible, collaboration among actors is very hard to maintain and the network will fail. In these networks where consensus is hard to reach, an important responsibility lies in the hands of the governing actor. This coordinating actor must ensure the functioning of the network by carefully establishing a sufficient level of goal consensus while at the same time taking into account the diversity among network actors (Provan & Kenis 2008). According to Provan and Kenis (2008), even in networks where coordinators are able to establish a low or intermediate level of consensus the network can be able to fulfill its goal.

In the literature, many attempts have been undertaken to determine how networks can be governed. Provan and Kenis (2008) identified three different forms of network governance: lead organization governance; network administrative organization (NAO); and a shared participant governance. This typology has been widely used as a conceptual framework to study inter-organizational service networks. Some work has focused on shared participant types of governance where the network is regulated by all network actors (Raeymaeckers 2015; Raeymaeckers & Kenis 2016). However, most research has focused on lead organization types of governance (Provan & Milward 1995; Human & Provan 2000; Span et al. 2012a; Edelenbos et al. 2013). In these networks one leading agency has the main responsibility to govern the network and, according to Provan and Kenis (2008), is best equipped to govern the network when only low or intermediate levels of goal consensus can be established. This study focuses on the role of the coordinator—affiliated to this leading agency—dealing with the task of looking for goal consensus in highly diverse networks. In the next paragraph we focus on different types of governance roles coordinators can adopt to govern the network.

Types of Governance Roles

We use the typology of Span et al. (2012a) to make a distinction between three different governance roles that can be positioned on a top-down–bottom-up continuum: commissioner, co-producer and facilitator. A key feature of this typology is the extent to which decision-making power in the network is concentrated in the hands of the governing actor. At one extreme, the coordinator can make all decisions without consulting the network partners. At the other extreme, the decision-making power lies in the hands of the network partners (Span et al. 2012a). The commissioner can be situated at the top-down end of the governance continuum (Span et al. 2012a). This type of coordinator has a large amount of power and makes decisions independently. He or she determines how the network functions, stipulates which goals must be achieved, and how the network must be structured. The network partners are seen as executors of these decisions. This lack of influence by the partners also means that the network partners generally have less responsibility and have to invest less time and resources in the network. At the other end of the continuum, the coordinator acts as a facilitator. His main goal is to support the collaboration between the different network partners. The coordinator does not make any decisions. The power lies in the hands of the participating actors. The final decisions are made by the partners, which therefore have strong power in the network. Consequently, this means that the network partners are also supposed to invest more time in the network and have more responsibility for the network outcomes. Situated between the top-down and bottom-up extremes is the role of the co-producer. Here, the coordinator and the network partners strive for a balanced collaboration, in which the coordinator is seen as an equal partner next to the other organizations in the network. The decisions are made collectively, taking all partners, the coordinator included, into account. Consequently, the ultimate responsibility rests with all network partners including the coordinator.

We argue that the aforementioned typology, constructed by Span et al. (2012a), adds very important aspects to the research area of network governance. Rethemeyer (2005) concludes in a literature review that all governance roles developed in literature can be positioned on a continuum between bottom-up and top-down governance. Span et al. (2012a) have developed the first typology that explicitly takes this continuum into account to construct different network governance roles. We therefore view it as a very relevant framework for the analysis of public–nonprofit network governance.

Furthermore, Span et al. (2012b) emphasize that the performance of the governance roles is dependent on two different types of network contingencies: stability and complexity. Stability

refs to the predictability of the activities that have to be performed by the network. Complexity refers to the degree of coordination required to let the network perform well. According to Span et al. (2012b), in networks that can be categorized as stable and simple, a top-down type of governance (commissioner) will achieve the best results. In these networks the tasks can be described as rather simple and network actors should act according to strict regulations set by the government. These networks often have a very low level of diversity among network partners. In this study we focus on networks providing services toward vulnerable target groups. These networks are considered as complex and dynamic, with very complicated tasks (Span et al. 2012a, b). The problems of these target groups often need 'customized' or tailor-made solutions. The services provided by the network of nonprofit service agencies need to be provided according to the specific and varying needs of the target group. For this reason, Span et al. (2012b) argue that a facilitating coordinating role performs well in these highly complex networks. These coordinators allow network partners to participate in the decision making at the network level. As a result, the expertise of a very diverse set of network partners can be integrated to provide an answer to the complex problems of the network's target group (Span et al. 2012b). Following the abovementioned findings of Vangen and Huxham (2012), we can state that in these networks the congruency between joint network goals and the goals of participating organizations is very low. In these networks the search for goal consensus can be considered as an important challenge for the coordinator. In this chapter we empirically investigate this proposition by comparing the goal-setting process between three networks governed by coordinators adopting different types of governance roles.

Method

Case Selection

In Flanders 72 networks are founded at the level of the municipality or city to improve the provision of services to families with children in poverty. In all these networks the organizations exchange information about families in poverty and undertake different actions to improve service delivery to families with children. Using insights of Span et al. (2012b), we can define these networks as complex and dynamic. The needs of families with children in poverty, the target group of these networks, can be defined as 'wicked problems' (Rittel & Webber 1973). This target group therefore needs 'customized' or tailor-made solutions delivered by a highly diverse set of service organizations (Span et al. 2012a). First, we had to select the relevant cases from the total list of 72 networks. The 72 networks showed large variations in terms of type of clients and governing actors. We decided to conduct a purposive sampling method (Yin 2014) to focus our qualitative analysis on a limited selection of relevant cases that would allow us to meet our research aim. We follow Bryman (2008) and Yin (2014) stating that this sampling method allows the researchers to better understand the social processes in a given context. As our aim is not to generalize findings, but to understand the process of network coordination, we argue that this sampling method will advance our understanding on the extent to which different types of coordinators are able to establish goal consensus (Yin 2014).

In a first step, we decided to select networks governed by a public actor that provides services to families in poverty. We therefore made a first selection according to four criteria. First of all, a public agency affiliated to the local government had to be the leading agency of the network. Second, the network and its organizations have to work with families with children in poverty. The network also has to consist of a diverse set of autonomous nonprofit organizations and finally, the child poverty rate in the municipality has to be higher than the average rate. As our study aims to analyze the role of the governing public actor in networks dealing with complex and wicked issues (Span et al. 2012a), we considered these criteria very important for selecting the appropriate cases for our research. As a result, ten networks were considered as relevant for our research. In a next step, our aim was to select three cases that showed a distinctive variation in terms of network governance. As our study is focused on analyzing how different types of coordinators are able to establish goal consensus, we needed to look for networks where the coordinators apply different governance roles. We therefore interviewed the coordinators and network partners of these ten networks on which role the coordinator applied while steering the network. We used the perspective of both network partners and network coordinator to determine the governance role. Using this information we selected one network where the coordinator adopts a facilitating role, one where the coordinator adopts a co-producing role and one where the coordinator adopts a commissioner role. Given our purposive sampling method (Morris 2006), this variation allowed us to conduct a comparative in-depth analysis on the extent to which different types of coordinators are able to establish goal consensus in the network.

Table 7 provides basic information about the selected networks (Network A, B and C). Table 8 presents an overview of the different types of services provided by the organizations in the selected networks. We observe that the three networks are characterized by a high level of diversity, with different types of services being provided.

Network	A	B	C
Type of network governance[3]	Leading organization	Leading organization	Leading organization
Type of governance role[4]	Facilitator	Co-producer	Commissioner
Target group	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	Families with children in poverty in the municipality	All families with children in the municipality, with a special focus on families in poverty
Type of services provided	Events and information sessions for professionals and target group	Information tools and information sessions for professionals with focus on making the bridge between local associations and local educational institutions	Courses for target group and material help through the network second hand store

Table 7: Overview of selected research cases

Service domain	A	B	C
Financial services	1	1	1
Cultural activities	1		
Local government	1		1
Health care	4		1
Parenting support	2	1	1
Education	2	13	3
Sociocultural associations	2		1
Leisure	1	3	1
Coaching children and families	1	3	
Poverty organizations		1	1
Total	15	22	10

Table 8: Overview type of services provided by organizations in selected research cases

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[3] Provan and Kenis (2008)
[4] Span et al.(2012a)

Network A: The Facilitator

The first case consists of an inter-organizational network located in a municipality in Brussels. The Public Center for Social Welfare took the initiative to apply for this funding, which was eventually granted and led to the appointment of a network coordinator who was hired by all network partners together. The network partners stated that the coordinator was appointed by them to support the participating network partners to formulate a common framework and one network vision and to support the practical execution of the projects. This coordinator can thus be defined as a facilitator according to the typology of Span et al. (2012a). Her official task is to serve the demands of the network partners.

Network B: The Co-producer

The second case consists of an inter-organizational network also located in a municipality in Brussels. As in the previous network, the Public Center for Social Welfare took a leading role in the initiation of the network. It was the conviction of the coordinator that the goals of the network had to be based on the needs of everybody involved including the needs of the coordinator and the leading organization. The initial role of the coordinator could thus be characterized as a co-producer, located at the center of the typology of Span et al. (2012a).

Network C: The Commissioner

The third case is a Flemish inter-organizational network located at a municipality in Antwerp. Similar to the previous cases, the Public Center for Social Welfare was the initiating and leading organization that drew up the project proposal that was eventually approved for funding. This approval led to the appointment of a coordinator, a process that was initiated by the Public Center for Social Welfare. The coordinator emphasized that it was her task to lead the network in the right direction, and that in this process, she had a significant amount of control. The initial role of the coordinator could thus clearly be characterized as a commissioner, located at the top-down end of the typology of Span et al. (2012a).

Qualitative Interviews

We use qualitative interviews with network coordinators and network partners in order to gain insights into the way that they perceive the governance as executed by the network coordinator (Denzin & Lincoln 2000).

The first step in the data-gathering process was to interview the network coordinators. The second step was to interview the other network partners. We first asked the coordinator to point out the organizations he or she had the most contact with. We then started to interview members of these organizations about the way they experienced the goal-setting process and the role of the coordinator. In addition, we also contacted organizations that were not pointed out by the coordinator to avoid potential bias. Table 9 shows the numbers of coordinators and network partners interviewed. We used a semi-structured questionnaire, which included questions on the role of the coordinator (1) during the goal-setting process of the network, (2) the selection of partners that are included in the network, (3) the way tasks are divided and (4) the evaluation of the network activities. In this chapter we focused on the particular set of questions on the goal-setting process. We asked for information on the network goals, how coordinators formulated the network goals, the extent to which consensus existed, how coordinators established goal consensus and the perception of partners on this process. The respondents were asked to

illustrate their findings with examples of real-life situations and discussions during the network meetings.

	Network A	Network B	Network C
Number of coordinators (interviewed)	1(1)	1(1)	2(2)
Number of coordinators (interviewed)	15(10)	22(12)	10(9)

Table 9: Overview of conducted interviews

Table 9 represents an overview of the number of network partners, the number of partners that were interviewed (and the number of actual interviews) and the number of coordinators (and the number of actual interviews).

After the interviews were fully transcribed, we used NVivo software for open coding, followed by a process of axial coding (Berg 1989). In this last phase, the different open codes were grouped into categories and sub-categories, based on the research of Span et al. (2012a). We made a distinction between the codes that were gathered from the interviews with the coordinators and the codes that were collected from the interviews with the network partners. We then focused on the codes that gave information on how and the extent to which the coordinators were able to establish goal consensus in the networks.

During the analysis we introduced some additional measures to enhance the face validity of this research, more precisely, to make sure that our research measures reflect what they intend to measure (Hardesty & Bearden 2004). First of all, the coding process was supported by a codebook developed in close collaboration between three researchers who worked on this project. The codebook was reviewed after analyzing each interview and after every coding round. This resulted in a codebook that was straightforward and unambiguous. Another measure involved was the large amount of interviews that were conducted in each research case. We made sure that the selection of interviewed organizations reflected the diversity of the network. By doing so, we pursued a good balance between the views of the network partners and the views of the network coordinators in the presentation of the results.

Results

In this section, we discuss the results and clarify how the different governance roles are perceived by the various stakeholders involved. We first elaborate on the results of the network where the coordinator adopts a facilitating role (network A). Subsequently, we focus on the network with a co-producer (network B) and the network with a commissioner (network C).

Network A: The Facilitator

This network was initially governed by a facilitating coordinator. This means that the coordinator was very reluctant to intervene during the goal-setting process. Her initial aim was to support the network actors to formulate the network goals by themselves. Our interviews, however, show that during the goal-setting process the coordinator decided to make a shift from a facilitating role toward a commissioner role. An important reason for this shift is the lack of consensus among partners on the overall goals of the network. The coordinator emphasizes that the differentiation of network partners resulting in different views on the joint network goals made it impossible to establish consensus on the network goals. Each organization had its own idea of the goals that should be prioritized in the network. Some of the organizations wanted to focus on pedagogical support, others on health prevention, and others wanted to create a garden for children to work in, while others wanted to focus on schooling.

> *"Each organization has its own insights and approach, there were a lot of different ideas in the beginning. There were times when I said to my superior: 'how is it possible that you got them all together and that they hired me?'* [...]*, the ideas are so different."* (Coordinator Network A)

The coordinator stated that she was not able to establish a consensus when adopting a facilitating role. As a result she decided to 'push through,' meaning that she started taking decisions without consulting the whole network. This resulted in a focus on one particular project, 'Kids day,' an event that was organized to bring parents, children and local organizations together by organizing workshops and other activities on one location in the municipality during 1 day. It was the coordinator who made the decision to focus on this project at the expense of other ideas that were formulated by the partners.

Because the coordinator experienced many difficulties to establish consensus on the network goals, she discussed many issues with the representative of the Public Center for Social Welfare, the leading organization of the network. The coordinator emphasized that during these discussions decisions were often made beforehand, which led to a biased decision-making process in which the coordinator and the leading agency had more influence on the development of the network goals compared to others. This led to a situation in which the network partners did not support the decisions that were being made, as they were often not involved in the decision-making process.

> *"There are things that I suggested of which* [my boss of the Public Center for Social Welfare] *said 'no, that's not going to happen'.* [...] *So yes, in that way the Public Center for Social Welfare has more say, because my boss works at the Public Center for Social Welfare."* (Coordinator Network A)

The coordinator thus admits that many decisions concerning the network goals are already being made behind the scenes. This situation followed from two developments. First, the coordinator experienced a lack of goal consensus among the partners, which led to the coordinator taking control over the situation, as she felt that the network was heading nowhere without her guidance.

Second, the leading public agency has a lot of influence behind the scenes, which led to the fact that a number of ideas and proposals were already dismissed before they were even on the table. We can therefore state that the leading agency pushes the facilitating coordinator to become a commissioner.

Our analysis of network A shows that when the partners in a network are very differentiated and not acquainted with one another, and when a common goal cannot be established, a facilitating coordinator, in order to achieve the network goals, should take some control and will naturally shift more toward the role of commissioner. In this case both the leading agency and the coordinator decided that a facilitating role is not the best way to establish consensus among network partners. The network actors were unable to formulate a consensus on which goals the network had to pursue. Most of the decisions were made by the representative of the leading agency and the coordinator.

Network B: The Co-producer

In network B, the coordinator adopts a co-producing role. The coordinator emphasizes that decisions have to be made in close collaboration between the network actors and the leading agency. More specifically, it was the coordinator's conviction that she had to set the goals together with the partners and that these goals had to be based on the needs of everybody involved, including the needs of the leading public agency, the Public Center for Social Welfare. This participative goal-setting process in which all voices are heard is an important characteristic of a co-producing coordinator (Span et al. 2012a, b). This coordinator wants to involve all network partners in the formulation of the network goals, including the leading agency in the formulation of the network goals.

The coordinator's first task was to guide the process of defining the network goals. She initiated the process by visiting and questioning many partners about their problems and needs. The network partners also gained the opportunity to formulate suggestions about the network goals. This process was confirmed by all network actors:

> *"Yes, we have been consulted. They came to us to ask questions, as well as to the others. Afterwards they presented us the result of all these questions and this allowed us to see that we are not the only ones with problems. It allowed us to put words on our problems in order to further create a project together to solve them."* (Participant Network B)

In a next step the coordinator analyzed this information and presented the results of the discussions on a meeting with the entire network. As a result, the entire network including all network partners and the leading agency formulated and approved a set of network goals.

The first set of goals of network B focused on a better knowledge and awareness of organizations and initiatives in the municipality to improve referrals from one organization to another. Next, the network also focused on sensitizing personnel of schools in order to treat children in poverty in a better and more respectful way. In contrast with network A, the initial co-producer role adopted by the coordinator has not changed over time. She sticks to her co-producer role, which is often described by the partners as bottom-up, open, participative, efficient and decisive.

> *"She is a super catalytic converter for all our reflections and our ideas. She succeeds at linking everything and at making really good synthesis of what we say. She synthesises and at the same time it is hyper participative. It is [...] very open in fact. It is not at all directive, really not at all."* (Participant Network B)

We conclude that the co-producing coordinator was actively involved in establishing a goal consensus with every actor in the network. She organized one-on-one discussions with every individual network actor and presented the results of these discussions at a meeting with the entire network. In a final step she guided the entire network in making a well-informed decision on the network goals. As a result, all actors, including the leading agency, have the feeling of being involved and of having a role to play in the realization of these goals. The good result of the co-producing governance role can, however, be explained by the lack of conflicts among network partners. Our results show that in comparison with network A, the coordinator experienced less variation among network actors on which goals the networks should pursue. Moreover, all respondents of network B emphasized that few difficulties were encountered in finding goal consensus. As a result, an agreement was easily established on the network goals. This again contrasts the results of network A where the network coordinator experienced many difficulties to reconcile the varying views among network actors.

Network C: The Commissioner

In network C where the coordinator adopts a commissioner role, an extra coordinator was hired who partially took over some of the tasks as the network started to develop and expand. When we zoom in on the actual formulation of the network goals in network C, we find that in this case, the network goals were largely determined by the coordinators, who also came up with the majority of ideas for specific actions and projects. As already mentioned before, the main goal of this network is to reach the target group—families with children with a specific focus on families in poverty—more effectively, and to create more awareness and collaboration in the fragmented landscape of organizations focusing on poverty reduction in their municipality.

Our analysis shows that the coordinators emphasize that it is impossible to get each network partner involved to discuss every detail and to get each partner involved in every step of the goal-setting process, as this leads to inefficient decision making. The main reason is that in this network the partners show a high level of differentiation. The coordinators of network C emphasize that they encounter a high level of variation among network partners concerning their preferences regarding the network goals. This finding contrasts the result of network B where our respondents experience a very low level of variation among network actors concerning their views on the network goals. The coordinators of network C therefore emphasize that open discussions about the network goals among the diverse range of partners would therefore be very difficult. As every partner has its own wishes and demands, the coordinator and partners emphasize that it is more efficient to limit the level of participation of the partners. This strategy was applied by the network coordinators to avoid conflicts during the goal-setting process. They felt that, because of this lack of agreement on joint network goals, an open discussion could lead to conflicts among participants. This conflict could, according to the coordinators, negatively influence the functioning of the network.

> *"We prepare something in advance. There's no use in getting all the partners together to say 'tell us, tell us, what do you want, what's possible?', […] and that it finally turns out that what they want/propose is budgetary not possible. That's not how it's supposed to go, you want to get somewhere […], but there's no point in investing time in something and then saying 'no, it's not possible'."* (Coordinator Network C)

For this reason, the coordinators first formulated some general ideas about the goals that the network, according to them, should pursue. In a second step they had one-on-one discussions with all network actors on the ideas that were formulated by themselves. Using the information they gathered during these discussions they did some minor adjustments on their initial ideas about

the network goals. Finally, the decision about the final set of network goals was made by the network coordinators and the network partners were then informed about this decision on a meeting with the entire network. We conclude that in contrast with network B where the decisions on the final network goals are made by all network actors including the leading agency, the network goals of network C were largely determined by the coordinators. By doing so, the coordinators try to find a balance between getting partners actively involved and working in a way that feels efficient, without losing grip on the network and without losing the ability to make unilateral decisions if necessary.

Our analysis shows that network partners are satisfied about the way the goals are determined in the network. They agreed to the fact that the coordinator has the opportunity to invest more time in the network and hence can effectuate more ideas and think more about the implications and the practical elaboration of network projects and initiatives. Both the network partners and the coordinator emphasize that this is the best way to achieve the network goals most effectively.

> *"You've got your own projects, you've got a lot of work with that, and to also make time for totally different projects* [...]*, that's just too much to ask, we couldn't do that. And that's why I think it's very good, they make proposals and you can give feedback on that. We think that's fine, and then you can get involved 'we can do this, we can do that', and that's different for every organization."* (Participant Network C)

We conclude that the coordinators in this network adopt a commissioner role. Special emphasis should be put on the fact that, despite the presence of more than one coordinator, the power to set the network goals is still primarily situated at the coordination level, admittedly divided between the different coordinators. Toward the network as a whole, the coordinators adopt a commissioner role, which is broadly accepted by the different network partners as this improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the network.

Discussion and Conclusion

One of the key challenges for networks of nonprofit service organizations and public agencies is to establish an integrated network among a differentiated set of service agencies (Provan & Kenis 2008; Raeymaeckers 2015; Raeymaeckers & Kenis 2016). Following earlier studies we argue that a crucial step in creating an integrated network is to find consensus among network actors on the goal of the network (Van de Ven 1976; Provan & Kenis 2008). However, we argue that the creation of consensus on a common goal is a very challenging task. As nonprofit organizations have their own individual goals to fulfill, tensions can arise when the network does not take these individual goals into account. Network governance should therefore look for ways to create consensus among a set of network goals, taking into consideration the individual goals of the organizations participating in the network. This study makes a contribution to the exponentially growing body of scientific studies focusing on the governance of public–nonprofit networks (Cairns & Harris 2011; Cornforth et al. 2014; Stone et al. 2010, 2014) by analyzing how goal consensus can be reached in three public–nonprofit networks governed by a leading organization (Provan & Kenis 2008).

We follow literature showing that the coordinator affiliated to the leading agency can adopt different roles while coordinating the network (Span et al. 2012a), often situated on a continuum between bottom-up and top-down. The typology of Span et al. (2012a) was used to analyze the governance roles adopted in our three network cases. We made a distinction between a facilitator, a co-producer and a commissioner. The key question of our study concerns the extent to which each of these governance roles is able to establish a consensus on the common goal of the network. Our qualitative research provides two important guidelines for the governance of public–nonprofit networks.

First, our study indicates that in networks with a large diversity of network actors and where a consensus is difficult to establish, a facilitating network coordinator does not perform well. In these networks a more steering type of governance role clearly performs better. Our finding therefore contrasts the proposition of Span et al. (2012a, b), stating that in complex networks a facilitator is the most effective governance role. This finding is illustrated in network A. The coordinator of this network emphasizes that in this network, a facilitating role was impossible to maintain. The network is not able to make a decision based on a consensus among network partners. The coordinator therefore decides to adopt a more leading role as a commissioner to overcome the differences and to establish a shared set of network goals. In the views of network actors and network coordinators, the diversity among network actors plays an important role in determining the role of the coordinator. The higher the level of diversity among network partners, the more difficult it will be to find a consensus. We, however, find that consensus can be established when a commissioner governs a network consisting of a very diverse set of nonprofit organizations. In network C both partners and network coordinators positively evaluate the way the network goals are established. We more specifically show that the network partners stress the advantages of a commissioner in terms of efficiency. These findings clearly show that in highly differentiated networks a commissioner is necessary when trying to find a consensus on the common goal. In network B the results show that our respondents perceive less conflict and tensions than the respondents of network C. As a result, the co-producer experiences few difficulties to establish goal consensus among network actors. All partners agree on the network goals and have the feeling of being involved in the formulation and realization of the common network goal. According to these results, we argue that in networks where actors and coordinators perceive few differences among participants on the common goal, a co-producing coordinator will be able to establish goal consensus.

Second, we emphasize that the participation of network actors in the formulation of network goals is essential when trying to establish goal consensus. Interestingly, the positive result of both types of governance roles in networks B and C (commissioner and co-producer) can be explained by the practice of synthesis, which was conducted in both networks. In his highly influential work on brokerage, Burt (2004) emphasized the important role of synthesis by brokers in a network. According to Burt (2004), synthesis reduces conflicts among different network actors when brokers use the information they gather from different parts of the network to create new ideas. In networks B and C the coordinators created a synthesis on network goals using the information they gathered during the one-on-one discussions with different network actors. Network coordinators synthesized the information and formulated the network goals which they then discussed with all the network actors. In case A where the network was governed by a facilitator, the coordinator was also involved in one-on-one discussions but was very reluctant to make a synthesis on the network goals. The final decisions about the network goals were made in close collaboration with the leading organization, without consulting the network actors. As a result, participants were less satisfied with the final decision on the goals of the network.

As networks become increasingly important for nonprofit organizations, this study aims to foster further debate between scholars of organizational and network governance on how public–nonprofit networks should be governed. In this study we have analyzed how network governance is able to create a set of network goals, while at the same time allowing the participating nonprofit organizations to participate in the decision making. We point out three important challenges for future research.

First, more work must be conducted to unravel the causal relation between network governance and network consensus. In this chapter we used qualitative data to provide empirical evidence on how different types of network coordinators were able to establish network consensus among a diverse set of network actors. Additional evidence on the causal relation between governance and consensus could be provided by conducting a quantitative longitudinal study on the performance of network coordinators over a certain period of time. Such an approach could for example provide more evidence on the extent to which the governance role is dependent on how the composition of the network changes over time (Provan & Kenis 2008). For example, a longitudinal research design allows the researcher to test the hypothesize that when a given network coordinated by a facilitator attracts more and diverse network participants, the network coordinator will be more able to build consensus when he or she switches to a commissioner role.

A second challenge refers to the notion of power. We focus on the distribution of power in decision making among network participants and different types of coordinators (facilitator, co-producer and commissioner), with the commissioner typically being more influential in public–nonprofit networks. Van Rensburg et al. (2016), however, argue that this notion of power may fail to capture the more subtle ways in which power reveals itself in networks of service organizations. They therefore suggest to study power in networks using the concept of governmentality, analyzing how power is dispersed and negotiated through the network by different practices of network actors. We suggest that further studies may use this notion of power to capture the more subtle power dynamics in public–nonprofit networks.

Third, we suggest that future research should focus on the role of trust. The analysis of network C clearly shows that a commissioner is able to create consensus in the network at the expense of participation of network actors. Given these results we argue that a commissioner can only act in an effective way when the coordinating agency and coordinator receive a high level of trust from the network partners. We therefore argue that further analysis should focus on the role of trust for the performance of network governance (Gazley 2010; Saab et al. 2013).

Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the role of the network coordinator in establishing consensus among a large diversity of network actors in lead organization public–nonprofit networks. We suggest that further research should also focus on the extent to which consensus is established in networks with other types of network coordination such as shared-governed networks (Raeymaeckers & Kenis 2016), networks governed by a steering group (Lindencrona et al. 2009) or a network administrative organization (Provan & Kenis 2008).

Finally, we suggest that future studies may follow Carboni (2016) and Schmid and Almog-Bar (2016) by focusing on partnerships between nonprofit, public actors and private businesses dealing with similar issues. Many authors state that especially in western welfare states the inclusion of private businesses in networks tackling societal issues is often considered as a very challenging step forward in building networks that will provide a responsive answer to the needs of vulnerable target groups (Bode et al. 2013; Henriksen et al. 2012). We therefore hope that this chapter will inspire authors to further develop a research agenda on the specific governance challenges of networks consisting of a diverse set of actors (public, nonprofit and private) dealing with important but very 'wicked' societal issues.

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Chapter 4

The coordination of networks among specialists and generalists

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Abstract

We analyze the coordination of networks of generalist and specialist service providers. We conduct qualitative interviews in a network of specialists and generalists providing support and services to families in poverty in Antwerp, Belgium. We find that a facilitator is able to protect the professional autonomy of the professionals within these collaborations. We however notice that the vertical complexity within these networks often hinders the coordinator to adopt a facilitating role towards the professionals. Other actors within this vertical complexity push the coordinator to adopt a commissioner role, which has negative implications for the professional autonomy of the collaborating professionals.

Introduction

The importance of networks among generalist and specialist service providers in the provision of services to clients with complex issues has been extensively documented (Blom, 2004; Ellem et al., 2012; Raeymaeckers, 2016; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013; Smyth et al., 2006; Wholey & Huonker, 1993). These authors argue that when networks succeed in combining the expertise of generalists, with their holistic views on complex problems, and specialists, who dispose over very specific knowledge in a certain area of expertise, the quality of services towards vulnerable target groups will improve significantly (Blom, 2004). However, literature also shows that networks between generalists and specialists should not be taken for granted as they unite different service providers with different backgrounds, different knowledge bases and different ethical and normative views (Blom, 2004; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013).

In order for these networks to be successful, they have to achieve a level of network integration among a highly differentiated set of service providers (Rosenheck et al., 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995; 2001; Milward & Provan, 2006; Provan & Kenis, 2008). In order to achieve the acquired levels of integration among these differentiated sets of generalists and specialists, network coordination is considered as indispensable (Edelenbos et al., 2013; Klijn et al., 2010). In this chapter, we use the research of Span et al. (2012a; 2012b) to study how networks among generalist and specialist service providers should be coordinated. Span et al. (2012a; 2012b) state that within local networks providing support to vulnerable target groups, a facilitating governance role will enhance the effectiveness and the efficiency of the services that the network provides. A facilitator is able to connect the knowledge and expertise of this differentiated set of network actors, which is needed to tackle the complex problems that the network is confronted with. However, following studies such as Provan and Kenis (2008), we can assume that these networks of generalist and specialist service providers should not be seen as isolated networks, but as networks that are characterized by complex vertically layered network structures (see chapter 1; Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Chen & Graddy, 2010). Networks are often governed by a leading organization (Provan & Kenis, 2008) and flanked by the member organizations who dispatch the generalist and specialist professionals, which will complicate the task of collaboration. We therefore argue that these broader vertical structures (see chapter 1) should also be taken into account when studying the way these networks are and should be governed.

We conduct a qualitative research that focuses on the perceptions of the different network actors such as the leading organization, the network coordinators, the member organizations and the generalist and specialist service providers regarding the coordination within one network. We focus on a network where generalist and specialist service providers are collaborating to provide services to families in poverty.

The scientific contribution of this research is twofold. First, while Blom (2004) and Ellem et al. (2012) state that the coordination of networks of generalists and specialist is important for these collaborations to be successful, very little research has zoomed in on how the coordination among these practitioners should unfold. We start from the research by Span et al. (2012a; 2012b) and zoom in on the role that a coordinator should adopt in the coordination of networks of generalists and specialists. Second, Provan and Kenis (2008), Bratton and Chiaramonte (2009) and chapter 1 of this thesis show that networks of service providers are comprised of several layers of vertical complexity and are often governed by a lead organization (Provan & Kenis, 2008). This is also the case within networks of generalist and specialist professionals. In this research we do not only focus on the interaction between coordinators and specialist and generalist service providers. We also analyze the interaction between the network coordinator and the leading agency.

In the following paragraphs, we zoom in on the challenges that go hand in hand with these networks of generalists and specialists. Next, we provide insights on what research has taught us so far on the coordination of these networks.

The challenge of networks among generalist and specialist service providers

In the late nineties, early 2000's, the trend to divide social services into specialist and generalist practice became apparent (Blom, 2004). The division of professionals into specialized units and functions resulted directly from social workers' desire for professionalization (Eriksson, 1995; in Blom, 2004) and from the increasing demand for efficiency within social work practices (Blom 2004; Blom et al., 2017). Although specialization within social work has become widespread, textbooks and social work curricula still predominantly focus on generalist practice. Blom (2004, p. 27) defines generalist practice as the situation in which "*individual social workers in integrated organizations work with all sorts of problems and types of social work cases*". Generalists are able to focus on different life domains. The holistic view that they can obtain is the result of a broad spectrum of expertise, skills and knowledge. Specialist practice, on the other hand, can be regarded as "*facilitating development of more specific skills in certain areas*" (Bergmark, 1998, Bergmark & Lundström, 1998; all in Blom, 2004, p. 27). Specialists tend to specifically focus on one problem and work on this intensively, while generalists take the broader context into account and try to provide a holistic answer to these intertwined problems.

The division of professionals into specialists and generalists has led to many discussions on the benefits and disadvantages of both specialist and generalist social work. Some research supports the idea that specialization can lead to better skills, competences and expertise on certain life domains (Blom, 2004; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013), which provides specialists with the ability to adequately deal with clients that are confronted with well-defined issues (Blom, 2004). On the other hand, specialization can lead to gaps in service delivery and is often considered as inadequate to deal with wicked issues (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that vulnerable clients are struggling with (Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013). In a study conducted on the organization of personal services in Sweden, Blom (2004) therefore rightfully concludes that it is difficult to provide an answer to the question of whether generalist practice is better than specialist practice. He therefore develops an alternative model of personal social services that combines both generalist and specialist functions.

In this line of reasoning, studies have come to the conclusion that service networks should consist of both specialist and generalist service providers as these networks have been considered as crucial in the provision of services to clients with complex problems (Ellem et al., 2012; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013; Rose, 2011; Smyth et al., 2006; Wholey & Huonker, 1993; Blom, 2004; Raeymaeckers, 2016). Specialist expertise is needed to deal with very specific issues that clients are struggling with. At the same time, however, these specialists often do not have the required holistic scope to meet the complex needs of vulnerable target groups. Specialized service providers dispose of a very specific professional language, that is insufficient when it comes to explaining the complex situations of clients to other services (Blom, 2004). Specialist services alone are thus unlikely to cover the complexity of issues that the target groups face. Therefore, service networks should also include generalist service providers. These generalists, who adopt a more holistic and comprehensive perspective on these wicked issues, can "*prevent vulnerable clients from falling through the cracks of the service net*" (Raeymaeckers, 2016, p. 613) and often adopt a broker-role between several specialized services as they have more connections in the network compared to these specialized organizations (Wholey & Huonker, 1993; Raeymaeckers, 2016). The main reason for the fact that generalists have more connections, is that they are more involved in the different life domains of their clients and consequently maintain contacts with different and often more specialized service providers. Wholey and Huonker (1993) and Raeymaeckers (2016) have described the position of these generalists as crucial linking pins, which can overcome the compartmentalizing that often happens when specialized services are provided (Blom, 2004).

Despite these arguments that favor the need for networks of generalist and specialist service providers, literature also shows that for social workers operating in a welfare landscape populated by a range of different organizations and professions, engaging in a network can be a difficult task. Networks often consist of a variety of service providers that are subjected to differing remits, rules and foci and have a different knowledge base and even varying ethical and normative views (Blom, 2004; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013). The success of networks is often regarded as the extent to which the network is able to increase integration among a highly differentiated set of service providers (Rosenheck et al., 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995; 2001; Milward & Provan, 2006: Provan & Kenis, 2008). In an integrated network, all professionals are connected, and the exchange of resources between network actors is guaranteed. Service organizations draw on all resources available through information exchange, client referral and case coordination. Consequently, clients gain better access to a broad range of services and the network is able to improve client outcomes (Buck et al., 2011; Provan & Milward, 1995; Rosenheck et al., 1998). The fact that generalists are able to fulfill a linking pin position within these collaborations, can thus enhance the integration of networks of generalists and specialists.

However, network integration can be very difficult to establish. Many studies report that network integration will be negatively affected when the diversity among network actors results in conflicts between service organizations or when a shared goal or common purpose between service organizations is lacking (Atkinson et al., 2002; Rose, 2011). These differences between service organizations are often considered a major source of conflicts when organizations engage in a network (Altshuler, 2003; Cooper et al., 2008; Farmakopoulou, 2002; Lindqvist & Grape, 1999; Raeymaeckers & Dierckx, 2012).

Coordination of networks among generalist and specialists

In order to improve the integration of these networks of generalist and specialist service providers, Blom (2004) emphasizes the importance of the management of these collaborations. He argues that in collaborations of generalists and specialists, there is a "*need for leadership where 'management' is carried out through a* [...] *dialogue based on humanistic principles as well as real needs (top-down-top)*", instead of traditional top-down management (Blom, 2004, p. 41).

The task to manage these interorganizational collaborations among generalist and specialist service providers is often assigned to a network coordinator. This coordinator is considered as an important actor in these networks (Provan & Kenis, 2008; Edelenbos et al., 2013), as he or she is hired to improve the integration of the network and joins the efforts of the organizations and professionals that are present in these networks (Rosenheck et al., 1998; Provan & Milward, 1995). Klijn et al. (2010) point out that without adequate network coordination, it is impossible to attain interesting network results, especially within the complex interaction processes that characterize networks. The main goal of this coordinator should be to make sure that the network provides responsive services to the target group (Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

Following these ideas, the research of Span et al. (2012a) provides an interesting framework to approach the coordination of these network collaborations. These researchers constructed a typology of different roles that coordinating entities can adopt in the governance of a network. An important element within this typology is the decision-making power, more precisely whether this power is located at the level of the coordinator or at the level of the network members. Span et al. (2012a) place three different roles on a continuum ranging from a top-down to a bottom-up coordinator: the commissioner, the co-producer and the facilitator.

At the top-down end of the continuum, the coordinator adopts the role of commissioner. In this case, the network members have limited input opportunities as the coordinator has the power to make unilateral decisions. This also means that the coordinating entity has the main responsibility and has to give account for the decisions and actions of the network. The governance of the network is thus solely located at the level of the coordinator. Span et al. (2012a)

At the other end of the continuum, the coordinator adopts the role of facilitator. Here, the main goal of this coordinating entity is to facilitate the collaboration between the network members without intervening in the decision-making process, for example by organizing network meetings. This means that the coordinating entity is not involved in the final decisions, which are made by the network members. The network members have the main power, but also the main responsibility and they can be held accountable for the actions of the network. Span et al. (2012a)

Situated in between these two governance roles, is the role of co-producer. The network members and the coordinating entity strive for a balanced decision-making process in which the coordinator is an equal decision partner alongside the other network members. This entails that the decisions are made collectively, that the power is distributed across the different network actors and that the responsibility rests with all the network members as well as with the coordinating entity, who are all held accountable for the network. Span et al. (2012a)

Based on this typology, Span et al. (2012b) point out that the success of these different governance roles is dependent upon two network contingencies: the level of stability and the level of complexity that characterize the collaboration. On the one hand, stability refers to whether the network activities are predictable or not (Span et al., 2012b). Complexity on the other hand refers to whether the network needs a lot of coordination in order for it to perform well (Span et al., 2012b). The research by Span et al. (2012b) reveals that in local social support networks, a facilitating coordinator fits best with the network context. The fact that the demands from the target group are very diverse and complex, ranging from financial and housing support to health care and educational support, implies that the services need to be customized to the target group (Span et al., 2012b). The necessary knowledge and resources need to be integrated to meet the complexity of these problems. In order to meet the dynamic demands from the target group, the coordinator needs to connect the different (specialized) organizations. Span et al. (2012b) argue that a facilitating coordinator performs well in these highly dynamic and complex networks. A facilitator allows for the network members to be involved in the decision-making process of the network and because of this, the expertise of both specialists and generalists can be integrated to provide answers and solutions to the complex problems of the target group.

These ideas can also be found and are confirmed in several other studies. McGuire (2006) for example points out that the presence of a facilitating manager is often critical for the effectiveness of a collaboration. According to Steinheider and Wuestewald (2008), bottom-up participation and coordination can improve communications between senior management and frontline officers, which can help bridge the schism that often exists between these parties.

This hypothesis is confirmed in other research that focuses on leadership in collaborations of professionals providing services to vulnerable target groups (see for example Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Hean et al., 2015; Willumsen, 2009). The importance of adequate leadership within inter-professional collaborations has proven to be important. Reeves et al. (2010, p. 262) point out that "*the need for a clear leadership role has been found to be central to effective interprofessional collaboration and teamwork*". These authors also point out that effective leadership can be challenging, and that the role that the leader adopts is "*central to team performance*" (Reeves et al., 2010, p. 262).

Huxham and Vangen (2000) confirm that in order for these collaborations to address social issues such as poverty, health -, educational - and environmental issues adequately, more emphasis has to be put on a relationship that is characterized by shared responsibilities (Murrell, 1997; in Huxham & Vangen, 2000), the creation of a diversity of perceptions, competences and resources (Vansina, 1999; in Huxham & Vangen, 2000) and reconciling the goals of the different network members (Stewart, 1999; in Huxham & Vangen, 2000).

We thus conclude that literature on networks among service delivering professionals confirms the hypothesis of Span et al. (2012b) that within these complex and dynamic networks, the support of a facilitating coordinator is necessary in order for the network to achieve the predetermined goals, i.e. to offer responsive services to the often deprived target group.

We however notice that in the abovementioned research on networks among generalists and specialists service providers, many studies have focused on the interaction between the network members and the coordinator and seem to ignore that most networks are embedded in a broader governance structure. Provan and Kenis (2008) for example show that networks can be characterized by different governance structures ranging from self-governance to a more hierarchical type of governance such as governance by a leading organization. In these networks the leading organization is responsible for the network and often appoints a network coordinator. Networks are thus characterized by a certain level of vertical complexity (see chapter 1; Bratton & Chiaramonte, 2006). This vertical complexity refers to different layers within the collaboration and has implications for the power within the decision-making process (see chapter 1). In this chapter, we also focus on the interaction between network coordinators, the collaborating professionals (family coaches), and the leading organization of the network.

Methodology

Case selection: Family Coaches

In the city of Antwerp, Belgium, 29.6% of children under the age of three grows up in a deprived family (Kind & Gezin, 2018). This number is among the highest nationwide and has continued to rise over the last fifteen years. For this reason, the city of Antwerp has invested in initiatives, actions and services to fight this alarmingly high rate. One of these initiatives is 'Family Coaches', a network among specialist and generalist service providers that was established in 2014.

The main goal of this project is to unite the insights and expertise from different specialized organizations who all work with deprived families with children. Several of these organizations experience gaps and overlaps between their and other's services, as they often work with the same families but use different perspectives and insights. The lack of a general plan for these families and the lack of one coach who is there throughout the entire journey, was the main incentive for establishing the Family Coaches network. In order to overcome these issues of fragmentation, the project created a pool of family coaches who are dispatched part-time from their own organization and assigned to one family. The coaches adopt a more generalist and outreaching approach compared to their own organization, in which they often focus more on one specific life domain or problem.

The primary aim of Family Coaches is to give children in deprived families equal opportunities by the time they enroll in Preschool. The project thus focuses on children between 0 and 3 years old, but in order to create an optimal climate of upbringing, the trajectory also has to support their vulnerable parents (City of Antwerp & CAW Antwerp, 2016). This entails the creation of a safe, positive and stimulating environment for children to grow up in (City of Antwerp & CAW Antwerp, 2016).

The project wants to enhance the effectiveness of social services by investing in collaboration and improving the information sharing process between specialist and generalist professionals (City of Antwerp & CAW Antwerp, 2016). Blom (2004) points out that when different social workers are involved in one family case, the client situation often becomes more complex. Bearing this observation in mind, the Family Coaches project appoints one social worker to one family, who aims at providing sustainable, qualitative and generalist support. The family coach first has to acquire an overview of the specific situation and provide support on all life domains. Besides this, he or she also functions as a broker between the different professionals and organizations that are invested in the family.

The City of Antwerp is the initiator of this project and decided to involve CAW Antwerp (Center for General Welfare Work). This organization is concerned with the practical organization and implementation of the network. The CAW engaged two coordinators who steer the network, contact the local organizations, get together with the family coaches and are concerned with the more practical aspects of the project. These coordinators contacted several local organizations to inform them about the project and asked them for their cooperation. Eventually, they assembled eight local organizations who wanted to be involved in the network of Family Coaches. Table 10 gives an overview of these organizations, who range from specialist to more generalist organizations.

	Organization	Professional	Type of assistance
1	**Child & Family 'Kind en Gezin Antwerpen'**	1. Nurse 2. Family counsellor, experience expert in poverty	Specialist Child Care Services, preventive family support & health service (0-3 y)
2	**Center for General Welfare Work 'Area team Samik'**	3. Social worker - family counsellor	Specialist Prenatal consultancy & parenting support (-9 months - 6 y)
3	**Care network 'Amarilis – Emmaus'**	4. Pedagogue 5. Pedagogue	Specialist Home counselling service, parenting issues, behavioral problems (0-18 y)
4	**Center for childcare and family support 'CKG – De Link'**	6. Pedagogue – family counsellor	Specialist Center for child care and family support, problematic parenting situation (0-12 y)
5	**Context support 'De Touter – Terra'**	7. Family counsellor	Generalist Holistic contextual counselling on various life domains, problematic *parenting* and living situation (0-18 y)
6	**Context support 'OLO - Vizier'**	8. Pedagogue - family counsellor	Generalist Contextual counselling on various life domains, *alarming parenting situation* (0-18 y)
7	**Center for General Welfare Work 'Area team Noordrand'**	9. Social worker - housing counselling	Generalist Area team of the General welfare work center, addresses all life-domains
8	**Center for General Welfare Work 'Area team Berchem'**	10. Social worker - housing counselling	Generalist Area team of the General welfare work center, addresses all life-domains

Table 10: Overview of organizations involved in Family Coaches and the professionals that they dispatch

These eight organizations dispatch ten generalist and specialist professionals, ranging from a nurse to pedagogues and social workers. These family coaches work for the project of Family Coaches for a fixed number of hours each week. Their remaining hours are spent working in their own organization. This means that all family coaches are still strongly connected to their own organizations and the (more specialized) services that they provide there. One, two or more families are allocated to each family coach, according to the number of hours that they are dispatched to the project. The family coaches do not share an office space, but gather on several occasions in different settings. These occasions range from general meetings, supervisions and intervisions to co-counselling and trainings.

In general, we can conclude that the project of Family Coaches is a network among generalist and specialist service providers that focusses on preventive, generalist and accessible counselling for deprived families with small children. The main strength of this project is the connection that is made between generalist and specialist services and the link that these professionals maintain with their own organizations. The fact that they keep on working in their own organization, means that they get feedback and more specialist expertise and knowledge from their own organization and that they can provide this input in the collaboration of Family Coaches.

Data collection and analysis

We conducted qualitative interviews with the different actors in the network of Family Coaches in order to get insight into the roles that the coordinators adopted towards the leading organization and the family coaches themselves. Besides this, the experiences and perceptions of these different stakeholders are taken into account in order to get a deeper and more nuanced view of the concept of coordination of networks of specialists and generalists (Bryman, 2001; Mortelmans, 2007).

First of all, we conducted an interview with the leading organization and initiator, the City of Antwerp. In this interview, we focused on how the network was installed and which decisions were made by whom. This exploratory interview was followed by semi-structured interviews with the coordinators of the network (appointed by CAW), the member organizations and the network coaches who are employed and dispatched by these organizations. Table 11 gives an overview of the number of conducted interviews.

Interviewees	Number of interviews
Leading organization	1
Coordinators	2
Member organizations	6
Family coaches	8

Table 11: Overview of interviews

After all of the interviews were transcribed, we used open and axial coding processes (Berg, 1989). Open coding involved labelling all the interviews, while axial coding allowed us to group the open codes into categories and sub-categories based on the different aspects of collaboration that were discussed in the interviews.

We introduced some measures to enhance the face validity of this research. In order for our research measures to reflect what they intend to measure (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004), we developed a codebook in close collaboration between the two interviewers who conducted the interviews. This codebook enabled the researchers to analyze the qualitative data similarly and unambiguously.

We also interviewed most of the actors that are involved in the network. Besides the fact that it enabled us to get insights from all different angles, we also answer to the *two hats problem* that is identified by Milward (2017). This entails that, in researching a network, the source of data should contain as many as possible different actors to get a more nuanced view of the collaboration. If we do not take different perspectives into account, we face a problem with the unit of analysis and the extrapolation of data. We avoid this by interviewing almost all the network actors that are involved in the network, and by making sure that the selected interviewees reflect the diversity of the network. The conducted interviews pursued a balance between the perceptions of the leading organization, the network coordinators, the member organizations and the family coaches.

Results

As mentioned in the aforementioned paragraph, the network of Family Coaches is characterized by a collaboration between generalists and specialists from different organizations. Previous research has already focused on the added value of these collaborations (Raeymaeckers, 2016). In the following paragraphs, we take a look at the roles that network coordinators adopt towards these networks of specialists and generalists. Besides this, we also take the different vertical levels of complexity into account and look at how these structures influence the collaboration of generalists and specialists.

Facilitating the interactions between the family coaches

The main aim of the coordination of family coaches is to facilitate the collaboration between the specialists and generalists to enable and enhance the exchange of expertise between these professionals. As Blom (2004) already pointed out, the complex problems that deprived target groups are often confronted with, are best to be handled by a combination of specialist and generalist services. On the one hand, specialists might benefit the more holistic approach that generalists are able to provide in order to deal with these wicked issues. On the other hand, generalists can benefit the more specialist knowledge that specialists can provide. We find that the coordinators of the Family Coaches-project facilitate this exchange by organizing intervision and supervision meetings.

Intervision meetings are aimed at advancing the expertise of professionals and improving the quality of their work (Van Kessel, 1998). These autonomous and self-governing intervision meetings (Van Kessel, 1998) bring together three or four family coaches with different backgrounds in order for them to exchange information, experiences, expertise and thoughts in a smaller, more safe environment. A rotation system makes sure that every coach is able to present a case from time to time. One of the coordinators is present during each of these meetings, but the input predominantly comes from the family coaches themselves. These meetings replace the individual meetings between the family coaches and the coordinators, in which the coaches used to brief their trajectories and ask questions if necessary. The coordinator describes this shift as follows:

> "*We used to have individual meetings with each family coach, but it's on their own demand* [that we organize intervision meetings]. *The strength of the project is that there is a lot of exchange of expertise. And when it's one on one* […], *it's actually just briefing about your trajectories. So the coaches asked me to drop the individual coaching and to organize intervision groups with three or four coaches.*" (Network Coordinator)

Individual support provided by coordinators towards the family coaches is thus perceived as less useful than intervision meetings among specialist and generalist professionals, as they do not cultivate the same exchange of expertise and are merely used as one-way briefing sessions. At the request of the family coaches, the coordinators thus started facilitating these intervision meetings. As already mentioned above, the fact that the coordinators organize these meetings without getting involved and as they let the input depend on the family coaches themselves, implies that they facilitate these intervision meetings. Although all of these family coaches work individually on different cases, they do experience the need to share their perceptions and expertise and to discuss their trajectories with other professionals. Several of the coaches explicitly mention the need to exchange information to become a better family coach, as they are better able to deal with the different issues that their deprived families are struggling with. The family coaches find it valuable that they can exchange information with their colleagues, as this can improve the quality of the trajectories that they offer. The family coach quoted in the paragraph below explains that

because of these intervision meetings where professionals can exchange information about families, she is better able to take over a case when necessary. This enhances the continuity of the support that they offer to families.

> "*If you take over a case from another family coach, the family does not have to share their story with me again. They don't have to tell me that they are going through a bad divorce, that her husband is in prison or that he died. No, I can go over there, and ask them 'how are you doing, because you must feel alone?'. The fact that you know what's going on and that you can say 'I know what's going on'. That's valuable.*" (Family Coach from organization 4)

The family coaches also experience more autonomy when it comes to implementing the gained perspectives and expertise. The family coaches are free to choose what they do with the knowledge that is presented to them during these intervisions meetings, and which advise or ideas they choose to adopt in everyday practice. The fact that the members of these intervisions get the opportunity to exchange information and expertise and that they can autonomously choose what to do with the knowledge and insights that they gained, is an important characteristic of intervision meetings (Van Kessel, 1998). The below quoted generalist family coach always used to follow her 'gut feeling' in her counselling trajectories, but because of her involvement in the intervisions, she was introduced to the benefits of working with methods and more systematic counselling.

> "*Not to let you be guided by schedules and methodologies, but just gut feeling. Its importance is certainly appreciated there. And I appreciate that vice versa. For example, the giant schematic methodical approach of a home support service. I do know that, but I simply don't use it. Now, by working so closely together, I do see more the value that it may have, and vice versa. So if you have black and white, we meet each other in the middle.*" (Family Coach from organization 7)

Although this family coach still primarily works from her 'gut feeling' or intuition and has the autonomy to not go along with the provided methodologies, she does see the benefits of these exchanges within the intervision meetings. Another family coach actively started using the methodologies that were provided to her by other family coaches during the intervisions:

> "*Then you notice that they are skilled in methods. There are a number of colleagues who have experience with Triple P* [Positive Parenting Program], *I do not. They then give advice on Triple P or on the three columns model.*" (Family Coach from organization 2)

This family coach had no experience with the Triple P-program, a pedagogical method, and eventually started using this method in her own counselling trajectories. She was thus able to enhance her professional expertise through these intervision meeting. The family coaches feel more supported in the use of these new methods and techniques and the new knowledge that they gain.

Next to these intervision meetings, the exchange of expertise is also facilitated during the supervision meetings. While the intervision meetings are organized more frequently and gather three or four family coaches, the supervision meetings gather all the family coaches and the coordinators and are organized four times a year by an external counsellor. These meetings are used to develop a shared identity and vision, and to exchange knowledge, skills and counselling methods. Or as Karvinen-Niinikoski et al. (2017, p. 53) put it, supervision enables "*both a place and space to refine and develop professional identity, knowledge and skills and for reflectively examining the challenges faced in everyday practice*". During the supervision meetings among

family coaches, an external therapist oversees and steers the discussion on cases that are handed on by the coaches themselves. Besides this, the external therapist also provides insights and new perspectives when necessary. Karvinen-Niinikoski et al. (2017, p. 58) point out that supervision is often used as a process to "*safeguard professional autonomy and expertise*" and that it can enhance both the quality of services and the ability to make a professional reflection. As already mentioned, these supervision meetings are facilitated by the coordinators. The fact that they only facilitate these meetings, becomes clear in the fact that they are not involved in this process of supervision. The coordinators take a step back and thus solely facilitate the interaction between the family coaches by practically organizing these supervision meetings in which the coaches are free to make their own decisions. This role is in line with the facilitating role that Span et al. (2012a) put forward.

> "*The other coordinator and I, we really take a step back, we try to emphasize 'pay attention to this and that', but the content comes from the coaches themselves. We are not there as coordinators, it's* [the contextual therapist] *who takes it over and leads it.*" (Network coordinator)

We conclude that the coordinators adopt a facilitating role in this process of collaboration between the family coaches. The coordinators organize both intervision and supervision meetings, without intervening in the content of these meetings. They make sure that every coach is able to attend the meetings and that they can make an active contribution to the meeting. The fact that the coordinators responded to the requests of the family coaches and organized intervision meetings instead of one-on-one briefings, and the fact that the coordinators do not actively participate in the supervision meetings, are clear examples of a facilitating role (Span et al., 2012). This facilitating role results in a work climate in which the family coaches feel that they can express their concerns and are able to ask for support from other coaches. The fact that the coordinators take a step back and do not lead this process, creates an atmosphere where generalist and specialist professionals are free to interact without any interference by the coordinator.

When it comes to the collaboration and exchange of expertise between the family coaches, the coordinators thus adopt a facilitating role in order for these professionals to maximize the exchange of expertise and to enhance the collective learning processes. If the coordinators would adopt a more steering role, the reciprocal exchange between the generalist and specialist family coaches - which has proven to be very important - would be influenced too much by the coordinator. The professional autonomy (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2017) of the generalist and specialist professionals would be hampered by this interference. The fact that the family coaches have the freedom to choose what they take along, entails that they can optimize their expertise without being pressured or influenced too much.

The influence of the leading organization: inflicting a shared registration system

Although the family coaches appear to have a large amount of professional autonomy due to the facilitating role that the network coordinators adopt, the vertical governance structure of the network, more precisely the different actors that are also involved in this network, influence this initial facilitating role and the professional autonomy that is experienced by the family coaches. In other words, the extent to which the coordinator is able to adopt a facilitating role and the amount of professional autonomy are influenced by the leading organization who is involved in this network.

To explain the processes that occurred, we need to elaborate on the vertical structure and the power relationships that are present in the network. The City of Antwerp is the leading organization in the network of Family Coaches. As the research by Provan and Kenis (2008) pointed out, this leading organization has the most influential position in the network hierarchy, which means that this organization has the main power in the decision-making process. In the case of Family Coaches, the City of Antwerp applied for funding and appointed the CAW Antwerp as the organization that is responsible for the practical organization and the implementation of the network. Because of this task, the CAW received funding for the recruitment of two part-time coordinators. Besides this, the leading organization also provided means to subsidize the member organizations at the offset of the network and means for training packages for the coaches. This financial network context leads to a situation in which the coordinators and the family coaches are dependent upon the leading organization (the City of Antwerp). Also, the City of Antwerp is perceived as a powerful organization by the network participants. We thus observe that the leading organization sometimes pushes the coordinators to adopt a commissioner role, which is at odds with the facilitating role that was described earlier.

An example of the powerful position that the leading organization adopts towards the other network actors (the coordinators and the family coaches), is the decision of the leading organization to implement an online registration-system in the project. A couple of months after the project was established, a discussion unfolded when this new registration-system 'Digit' was introduced. Digit was already used by the professionals and services of the City of Antwerp and collects information about clients in a systematic way. The professionals who work with DIGIT, are obliged to enter the necessary data such as identification data, the nature of the issue, continuous reports on the progress, etc. These data provide continuous support to the target group over the different services of the City of Antwerp. Within the project of Family Coaches, DIGIT was also introduced as the common platform in which all the family coaches had to register their families. It was the leading organization who wanted the coordinators to implement this system in order to keep track of the work that the project does and to provide a system that would enhance the transition towards other services after the Family Coaches trajectory had ended. The implementation of this online platform was however not received well by most of the family coaches. Some of the family coaches are not used to working with this online registration platform, and have reservations about the privacy and security of the information that has to be entered.

> "*Which guarantees can we give to the families? After which amount of time does the information disappear from the cloud? I didn't get answers to that. They ask me to simply comply* [with this decision]." (Family Coach from organization 7)

The above quoted family coach works with open files in her own organization. These open files, in which the professionals write down all the important details on the trajectories of the families, can be consulted by the families at all times. This professional is convinced that these files and the information that is in them, belong to the families. She is afraid that when the City of Antwerp implements the DIGIT registration system, the data will not only belong to the families. She is afraid that the leading organization will use the confidential information for other purposes, as it is unclear what this information might be used for.

Other organizations also have difficulties with complying to the registration system of the leading organization as DIGIT is in violation with the privacy principles of their organizations. This results in discussions concerning the role of the leading organization and the fact that they impose the implementation of DIGIT. The network coordinators are pushed by the leading organization to adopt a commissioner role and take charge of the process towards the family coaches as well as

the member organizations. The coordinators try to deal with this situation by on the one hand translating the demands of the leading organization towards the family coaches and the member organization. On the other hand, they try to explain the worries and doubts of the member organizations and family coaches towards the leading organization. The coordinators thus try to adopt a mediating position between the member organizations and the leading organization.

> "*I think that the coordinators always look at 'what do the family coaches want, what does the City say?' They try to find a good mean.*" (Family Coach from organization 1)

Although several of the family coaches realize that the coordinators make the effort to listen to them and take their opinions into account, the representative of the leading organization clearly states that the mandate to make the decisions lies with the leading organization.

> "*Sometimes, the coordinator will provide us with more information on the current affairs, the advantages and disadvantages of certain decisions that are approaching. But the mandate for these decisions lies with us.*" (Leading organization)

The leading organization allows this coordinator to translate the concerns of the member organizations and the family coaches but eventually the decisions can and is often made by the leading organization. The implementation of DIGIT was thus inflicted and the coordinators were asked to carry out this registration system. Because of this unilateral decision, the leading organization pushed the coordinators to adopt a commissioner role towards the family coaches in the implementation of this registration system. This translates into a situation in which the family coaches do not feel included in the decision-making process and their professional autonomy is hampered as they cannot decide independently what to do with the data and the information that they gather during their trajectories.

In practice, this led to a situation in which the family coaches do not comply with this decision that is passed on by the coordinators. Some of the family coaches decide to register their client information very limitedly:

> "*Yes, we have to put it in DIGIT, that's final. There's no room for discussion there, it's obligatory from the City. But we can do with it what we want. For example, if we finish* [a trajectory]*: 'what do we remove, what do we leave online?' We have a consensus on that, but the program has to be used, that's final.*" (Family Coach from organization 1)

Although some of them decide to partly comply with this registration system, others demonstratively refuse to do so. Because of these difficulties the coordinators also stopped registering the families that enroll in the project, as they felt that several of the family coaches had difficulties with the registration system and as a common and supported view on this aspect was lacking. This resulted in a situation in which the requirements of the leading organization were not met, while the family coaches felt as if their professional autonomy was not prioritized.

We can thus say that the vertical structure that is present within the network, i.e. the fact that there is a leading organization that has the mandate and the ability to make decisions unilaterally, influences the facilitating role that the coordinators initially adopt. And while their role shifts towards a commissioner role in the example of the DIGIT-registration system, this results in a situation in which there is no consensus concerning this aspect of the collaboration. The power dynamics that are tied to the vertical network structure thus influence the role that the coordinators can adopt, and also negatively influences the professional autonomy that the family

coaches experience in this collaboration as they are not free to register the obtained and confidential information the way their professional background allows them to.

Conclusion

While networks of generalists and specialists are very important in the provision of services to vulnerable target groups confronted with wicked issues (Rittel & Webber, 1973), coordination is indispensable in order for these networks to function accordingly. We found, in line with the research by Span et al. (2012b), that our research case, which is a network of generalist and specialist professionals, is most adequately coordinated by a facilitator. This type of coordinator was best able to unite the diversity of service providers, while safeguarding their professional autonomy (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2017; Engel, 1970).

In the case of Family Coaches, we find that the coordinators facilitate the collaboration between the different professionals by organizing intervision and supervision meetings. Intervision meetings prove to be essential in advancing the professional expertise and in improving the quality of their work (Van Kessel, 1998), as they unite a small number of professionals who are able to exchange information, experiences and knowledge. The professionals feel a large amount of autonomy within these meetings, as they have the liberty to take into account the pieces of information or support that interest or help them.

Besides these intervision meetings, the coordinators also organize supervision meetings, which gather a larger amount of professionals. These supervisions are led by an external counsellor, who uses methodologies and provides tips and tricks that can enhance the professional identity of these generalists and specialists (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2017). These supervisions also provide the possibility to reflect on one's actions and to take conclusions regarding future trajectories. The fact that the coordinators organize these intervision and supervision meetings without actually getting involved in the content of these discussions, proves that their role here is purely facilitating. Again, the professionals have the liberty and the professional autonomy to implement and use the knowledge and insights that they gained through these supervision meetings.

Although previous research has suggested - and our research has also confirmed - that a facilitating coordinator is best equipped to handle these networks of generalists and specialists, we find that several factors hinder the coordinator from adopting this role. The fact that these networks of generalists and specialists have to be seen within a larger network structure, i.e. that these networks are governed by a leading organization (Provan & Kenis, 2008), also has implications for the role that the coordinator can adopt. We more specifically show that the coordinators of generalist and specialist service networks need to take the vertical complexity of the broader network, i.e. the leading organization, into account.

The leading organization (Provan & Kenis, 2008) has the opportunity to impose certain decisions, and can ask the coordinators to adopt a commissioner role towards the professionals. This leading organization often provides the funding, and thus has some power leverages within the network. This implies that they can impose certain decisions, which then have to be implemented by the coordinators. To implement these decisions without the approval of the family coaches means that the coordinators have to adopt a commissioner role towards these professionals. In the case of family coaches, we found that the coordinators do not feel comfortable in this position and try to adopt a broker position between the aspirations of the leading organization and the concerns of the professionals. The fact that the coordinators had to adopt a commissioner role led to a situation in which the professional autonomy of the family coaches was hampered as they are

pushed to comply with the wishes of the leading organization. The power dynamics that are present in the Family Coaches-project, i.e. the fact that there is a leading organization who has a significant amount of say in the network, can thus push the coordinators to adopt a more commissioner role. This has a negative impact on the professional autonomy as experienced by the members of the network.

We can conclude that, due to the vertical complexity within the network, the facilitating role that the coordinators initially adopted and that supported the professional autonomy of the family coaches, was sometimes impossible to maintain.

As this research is a case-study of one single case, we have to be careful when generalizing our findings to other (types of) networks. The network governance and vertical complexity of the network case that is studied in this chapter, might look different elsewhere. We however believe that our findings are most likely to be applicable to other networks that are governed by a lead organization network (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In order to get insight into the processes that occur in other networks of generalists and specialists, further research is necessary. Networks of inter-professional collaborations that are for example governed by different modes of governance, i.e. self-governance or governance by a Network Administrative Organization (NAO, for more information see Provan & Kenis, 2008), should also be studied. In these networks, other dynamics might occur.

Another issue that has to be addressed, is the fact that this qualitative study was not able to measure the level of network performance (Voets et al., 2008) and did not take into account whether the network actually reached its predetermined goals. Our data are all based on the perceptions of the professionals, the coordinators, the leading organization and the member organizations. Future research should look into whether the network actually performs effectively at the client-level when being coordinated by a facilitator.

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Conclusion

Conclusion

In the concluding paragraphs below I summarize my main findings. I also elaborate on the implications of my study for policy and practice. I finally discuss the limitations of my research and provide recommendations for further research on this topic.

Goals of this research

The main aim of my thesis was to gain more insight into the governance of lead organization networks that are established to more effectively cope with child poverty on a local level. I researched twelve networks - funded by the Flemish and the Belgian federal government - that were organized on a local level and led by the local government. In the following paragraphs, I will recapitulate my findings by zooming in on the four research aims that I put forward:

1. To get more insight into how local lead organization-governed networks are structured. I zoomed in on the governance structures that arise in these networks and I looked into how various vertical layers of complexity are installed to deal with the tension between efficiency and inclusiveness that exists in these local networks.

2. To investigate the extent to which network coordinators who adopt different governance roles are able to enhance the process performance within these local networks. I used the framework of Span et al. (2012a) who make a distinction between a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator. To get more insight into the impact these governance roles can have on the process performance, I looked into three components of process performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability (Voets et al., 2008). My goal was to find out which governance roles would enhance the network process performance under what circumstances.

3. To gain insight into how network coordinators who adopt different governance roles are able to establish consensus on the goals within a network. I analyzed the extent to which different types of coordinators – again based on the framework of Span et al. (2012a) - are able to build consensus on a set of network goals in close collaboration with the nonprofit network partners.

4. To analyze the coordination of networks among generalist and specialist professionals. I elaborated on inter-professional collaborations between these generalists and specialists. I gained insight into how these collaborations can be encouraged, supported and enhanced through different coordination styles and mechanisms.

Summary of results

In what follows, I will summarize the findings that resulted out of these four research aims.

Different layers of vertical complexity

In the first chapter, I focused on the vertical complexity of lead organization modes of governance. I conducted interviews with network coordinators and network participants in twelve local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty. I found that - while Provan and Kenis (2008, p. 230) refer to governance as the installation of "*structures of authority*" - the networks in my study also tended to develop particular structures in order to enhance the collaboration between the different network actors. I more specifically focused on how networks governed by a lead organization deal with the dilemma between efficiency and inclusiveness. Due to the fact that networks are often comprised of very different network actors with different backgrounds, different expertise and different ethical and normative views (Blom, 2004; Kuosmanen & Starke, 2013), previous research has shown that the higher the diversity within these networks, the less efficient the decision-making process will function (Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Provan & Kenis, 2008). To enhance the collaboration and the decision-making process between these autonomous and diverse network participants, network governance has to establish a balance between efficiency and inclusiveness (Provan & Kenis, 2008). On the one hand, networks have to function efficiently and decisions have to be made in order for the network to move forward and be successful. On the other hand, networks need to pursue network inclusiveness, which means that they have to include the opinions and perspectives of all the network participants in the decision-making process. If a network does not reach sufficient levels of inclusiveness, it will be less able to build expertise and the exchange of information between the participants will not go as smoothly. My research shows that, in order to enhance both efficiency and inclusiveness, lead organization-governed networks establish different layers of vertical complexity. By installing vertical layers of complexity, more precisely by appointing network coordinators and installing steering committees and workgroups, this thesis shows that the network is better able to deal with this tension.

I found that the researched networks showed variations in terms of the level of vertical complexity. Some of the networks only appointed a network coordinator, while other networks were characterized by a vertically more complex structure. A first layer of vertical complexity is the level of the lead organization. All of the researched networks in this thesis are lead organization-governed networks, as the financial and subsidizing structures encouraged this mode of network governance (Provan & Kenis, 2008). A second layer of vertical complexity that I distinguish is the level of the network coordinator. This level of vertical complexity was also found in every network that I researched. None of the leading organizations governed the network directly. They all decided to hire a broker or intermediary who was in charge of the day-to-day coordination of the network. This broker position has two important functions. First, a coordinator can provide a forum for input for the network participants. This information can then be passed on to the leading organization in a comprehensible way. Second, the coordinator can be a translator for the demands and the expectations that the lead organization has towards the network participants. By translating these demands and putting them in perspective, the network partners better understand them and are better able to relate to them. A coordinator is thus able to make the network partners feel more included in the decision-making process, while the communication between the lead organization and the network partners becomes more efficient. The presence of a steering committee is a third layer of vertical complexity. A steering committee is a small group of network participants who are highly engaged in the network. During these committee meetings, substantive discussions can take place and decisions can be made with a small and comprehensive group of highly invested participants. The partners of the steering

committee thus feel more included while the network can function more efficiently due to the installation of this compact and decisive steering committee. The installation of workgroups makes up the fourth and final layer of vertical complexity. My research shows that network participants feel more included when they have the opportunity to speak their mind in these workgroups. The input that results from these workgroups is taken into consideration in the steering committee and by the coordinator and the lead organization. My research shows that network participants feel more included in the decision-making process, even if it is through indirect input. Also, the fact that these workgroups create a safe environment for participants to exchange ideas, knowledge and expertise, enhances the efficiency of the network.

Based on these insights, I can conclude that networks balance efficiency and inclusiveness by on the one hand gradually reducing the number of participants involved in the decision-making process (i.e. coordinator, steering committees, small workgroups) and by gradually narrowing the scope of the decisions that have to be made (i.e. steering committee makes general decisions, workgroups make more practical day-to-day decisions). The creation of vertical layers of complexity entails that the network is subdivided in smaller entities who all have different tasks and functions and who all have a say in different aspects of the network.

Process performance and governance roles

As I unraveled these vertical structures and found that every lead organization-governed network appointed a coordinator, an elaborate analysis on the roles of the network coordinator became apparent. Based on further analysis of the previously mentioned qualitative interviews in twelve local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty, I was able to get insight into the way these coordinators fulfill their coordination task. I used the framework of Span et al. (2012a) throughout the rest of this thesis. These researchers provide an interesting typology that makes the distinction between three governance roles that can be adopted in the governance of a network: commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator. Span et al. (2012b) bring forward the hypothesis that in networks that are installed to provide services to vulnerable target groups, a facilitator will perform well as these networks are characterized as highly complex and dynamic. While this hypothesis served as a starting point, I first focused on the link between these governance roles and the process performance of a network. Second, I zoomed in on how network coordinators are able to establish consensus in a network. Third, this thesis focused on the coordination of networks of generalist and specialist professionals. In order to make a concluding, transversal analysis of these three foci in the next paragraph, I will first summarize these findings one by one.

To analyze the extent to which these different governance roles are able to enhance the process performance of networks, I had to make the link with three components that determine this type of performance: legitimacy, accordance and accountability (Voets et al., 2008). The results of my study indicate that network coordinators need to adapt their governance roles according to the level of commitment, the diversity among the service organizations and the perceived trustworthiness of the leading agency in terms of negative or positive experiences of collaboration. When network coordinators adapt their roles to these different network characteristics, they are more able to enhance the legitimacy, the accordance and the accountability (i.e. the process performance) of the network.

I found that, when a network is characterized by high levels of commitment, a coproducing or facilitating governance role will lead to higher levels of legitimacy. As these highly committed partners want the opportunity to provide input in the decision-making process, a facilitating or coproducing role will enable this best and will thus enhance the experienced legitimacy. When, however, network participants are less committed to a network, a coordinator who adopts a

commissioner role will lead to higher levels of legitimacy as this top-down approach might be the only way to make the network move forward and ultimately enhance the legitimacy through this.

Second, I found that the positive or negative history of collaboration influences the governance role that the coordinator can adopt to enhance the accountability of the network. When the relationship between the network participants and the leading organization is characterized by a negative history of collaboration, a facilitating or coproducing role will enhance the accountability. In this case, the network participants want to be able to hold the leading organization or the coordinator accountable for the decisions that are made, which they also want to be able to influence. When, however, the collaboration between the participants and the leading organization is considered as positive, a commissioner role will lead to higher levels of accountability. In this case, the network participants trust the leading organization to take responsibility for the decisions and the functioning of the network.

Third, when the network is characterized by a rather homogenous group of participants, they are more likely to be able to make decisions that are based on consent. In this case, a facilitating or coproducing governance role will lead to sufficient levels of accordance, while the coordinator does not have to intervene heavily in the decision-making process. On the other hand, when a network is characterized by a very heterogeneous group of participants, reaching a consent based decision will often be more of a challenge. In this case, the coordinator can adopt a commissioner role in the search for consent to reach the required levels of accordance.

In search of consensus

Following these last insights, I also analyzed the extent to which these different governance roles are able to reach sufficient levels of consensus on a set of network goals among the network participants. In my thesis, I point out that consensus is not always easy to reach and should not be considered as the main criterion to assess the success of the network. In this respect, adequate governance proved to be essential to deal with the tension between integration and differentiation that characterizes network collaborations and that impacts the search for goal consensus.

In line with the abovementioned findings and based on the insights that were gained through qualitative interviews in three local networks, my research confirms that in networks that are characterized by a large diversity, a facilitating governance role will not lead to a consensus regarding the network goals. In these networks, a commissioner role appears to perform better. This finding challenges the findings of Span et al. (2012b), who explicitly put forward the facilitator as the most appropriate role when governing a diverse set of network actors. An explanation for this contradictive finding is found in the practice of synthesis. This practice, in which the coordinators organize one-on-one discussions and synthetize the information to create collective network goals, is considered as very important when establishing consensus in a network. While synthesis is an approach that is characterized by a top-down type of governance, it also enables the participants to provide input.

Collaboration between generalists and specialists

Although my previous findings suggest that a commissioner role performs best within networks that are characterized by a high degree of diversity, a case-study of a very particular collaboration between generalist and specialist professionals suggests otherwise. In accordance with the research of Span et al. (2012b), I found that a facilitator is best equipped to coordinate a network of generalists and specialists. The use of intervision and supervision meetings, facilitated by the coordinator, positively influenced the professional autonomy of the generalist and specialist professionals. Intervision meetings bring together small numbers of professionals with different backgrounds, in order for them to exchange information, experiences and

knowledge. These meetings are not regulated by a coordinator, which gives the professionals the liberty to develop their professional autonomy. Supervision meetings on the other hand are led by an external counsellor and often bring together a larger amount of professionals. The counsellor hands tips and tricks and works with certain methodologies to enhance the professional identity of the generalist and specialist professionals.

Although the coordinators facilitate these intervision and supervision meetings without getting involved, I find that the vertical complexity - which I discuss at the beginning of this thesis - can hinder this facilitating role. Consequently, the professional autonomy is also hindered. The fact that this network of generalists and specialists has to be seen within a larger network structure, i.e. that the network is governed by a leading organization (Provan & Kenis, 2008), also has implications on the role that the coordinator can adopt. A leading organization will sometimes impose decisions and ask the coordinator to adopt a commissioner role towards the professionals in the implementation of these decisions. Eventually, this led to a situation in which the professional autonomy of the family coaches was hampered as they were pushed to comply with the wishes of the leading organization.

I conclude that the facilitating governance role that enhances the professional autonomy of these collaborating generalist and specialist professionals, was sometimes impossible to maintain due to the fact that this network is characterized by a vertical complexity.
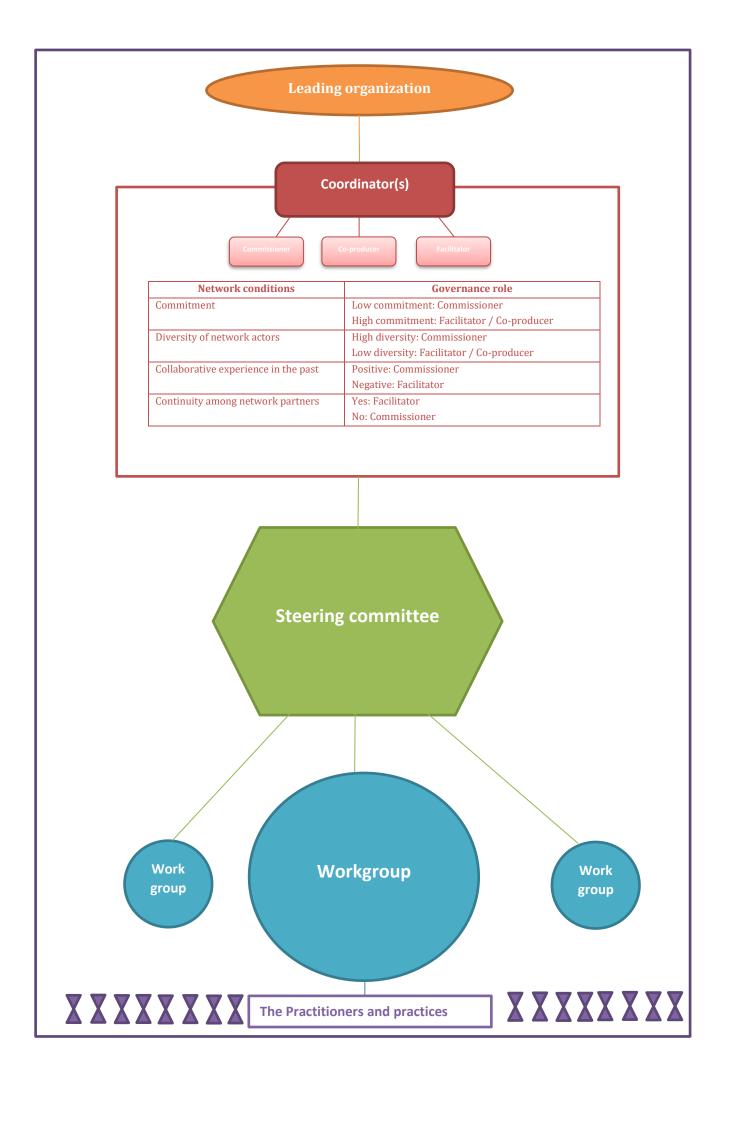
Concluding remarks

Based on the findings summarized in the above, I want to highlight three important conclusions and additions to the academic field. First, my results challenge and extend the well-known typology of Provan and Kenis (2008) who present the lead organization-governed network as a network with limited vertical complexity, i.e. consisting of a simple hierarchy between the lead organization and the network participants. I however found that these networks are often characterized by more complex levels of vertical complexity as the network participants are subdivided in steering committees and workgroups and are always governed by a coordinator who is appointed by the leading organization. I find that these more advanced levels of vertical complexity can on the one hand enhance both the effectiveness and the inclusiveness in the decision-making process, while on the other hand they can also hinder the collaboration in networks of generalist and specialist professionals.

Second, I show that the process performance of governance roles that coordinators adopt in dynamic and complex lead organization-governed networks (Span et al., 2012b; Provan & Kenis, 2008) vary according to different aspects that characterize the collaboration. For these insights, I built on the research by Span et al. (2012a; 2012b) who discern a commissioner, a co-producer and a facilitator governance role and who argue that there is no "*universal best way to govern a network*" (Span et al., 2012b, p. 191). While they reason that complex and dynamic networks – i.e. networks that are installed to provide services to vulnerable target groups - should be governed by a facilitator, I point out that this is often not the case. Network coordinators have to adapt their governance roles according to different network characteristics and they have to be able to adopt different governance roles towards different network participants. I found, for example, that a commissioner is indispensable in some networks as this coordinator can make important decisions which keep the network moving forward and enables the network to reach predetermined goals. On the network level, a commissioner can help channel the strategic interests of the different network participants which sometimes hamper the search for a common network goal. In this case, a commissioner is best able to guide this process and make the necessary decisions. On the level of the practitioners who actually work with -, and are in direct contact with the target group, a facilitator role will lead to better results when, for example,

specialist and generalist professionals have to work together. On this level, a facilitator will be able to unite the diversity among these practitioners while safeguarding their professional autonomy (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2017; Engel, 1970). On this level, a facilitator will provide the professionals with the liberty to use the knowledge and insights that they gain through the network collaboration in the way that they prefer. The professionals have the freedom to use their own and other available professional knowledge and make their own decisions. By focusing on these governance conditions in a qualitative manner, I was also able to complement the predominantly quantitative research as well as the scarce comparative research that has been conducted in this research area (Span et al., 2012a; 2012b; Provan & Kenis, 2008).

Third, I emphasize the importance of adequate governance in networks where consensus among all network actors is hard or even impossible to establish. While balancing differentiation and integration in these networks, it is up to the coordinator to establish sufficient levels of goal consensus in order for the network to move forward and in doing so, taking the diversity among the network participants into account (Provan & Kenis, 2008). I want to emphasize that this research adds significantly to the understanding that full goal consensus is not a necessary precondition for the network to move forward (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). I provide important insights that help networks to deal with the rich and indispensable diversity that exists within these local networks on child poverty. My research puts forward the practice of synthesis as an interesting and effective method to deal with this diversity and the experienced lack of goal consensus. By organizing one-on-one discussions with the different network participants, a coordinator is able to search for a minimal level of common ground among a diverse set of network participants. This practice of synthesis is able to provide an answer to the low levels of goal consensus that are often experienced in these highly divers networks of service providers. Although my research emphasizes that full goal consensus is almost impossible to reach, adequate governance, for example by the practice of synthesis, can lead to sufficient levels of goal consensus for the network to move forward and take relevant actions in the fight against child poverty on a local level.

Implications for policy and practice

What can we learn from the above findings for policy and practice regarding the governance of local networks? This thesis also wants to produce applicable and concrete recommendations for policy makers as well as for practitioners and other stakeholders of local networks. In what follows, I will elaborate on what policy and practice can take into account on the different levels of vertical complexity that make up a network. I synthesize the abovementioned scientific findings and provide recommendations for the different levels of vertical complexity. Taking figure 1 as a starting point, I will first zoom in on the leading organization, after which I will elaborate on the level of the coordinator, the steering committee, the workgroups and the practitioners.

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│        │        [Commissioner] [Co-producer] [Facilitator]      │          │
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Network conditions	Governance role
Commitment	Low commitment: Commissioner
	High commitment: Facilitator / Co-producer
Diversity of network actors	High diversity: Commissioner
	Low diversity: Facilitator / Co-producer
Collaborative experience in the past	Positive: Commissioner
	Negative: Facilitator
Continuity among network partners	Yes: Facilitator
	No: Commissioner

Steering committee

Work group   **Workgroup**   **Work group**

The Practitioners and practices

1. The leading organization

The first level of the network structure that can be found in figure 1 is the level of the leading organization. Within lead organization-governed networks, the leading organization has to be aware of the position that it occupies and the influence that it has on the network. This intervening influence became clear in the different chapters of this research and should be taken into account when governing a network.

First, I found – in line with the research by Provan and Kenis (2008) – that the leading organization has the capacity and the responsibility to oversee and regulate the tension between integration and differentiation. On the one hand, the leading organization has the main responsibility for increasing the integration of the network, which means that it has to install mechanisms to enhance and optimize the connections between the different network participants. On the other hand, the leading organization has to make sure that the differentiation among the network participants is high enough to deal with the wicked issues that the network is confronted with. This means that the leading organization has the final responsibility over the ongoing process of detecting and attracting a different range of network participants while also enhancing the connections between the partner organizations.

Second, the leading organization should also be aware and actively work on the perceptions of trustworthiness that the service organizations have towards them. In this respect, the negative or positive history of collaboration has to be taken into account. Previous research already found that the experiences that network partners have with the leading organization, influence the trustworthiness of this leading organization (Provan et al., 2009). In several of the researched networks, the network participants have had negative experiences in collaborating with the leading organization (e.g. an experienced lack of social support for their clients by the leading organization). As these experiences can negatively influence the network processes and the network governance, the leading organization should be aware of these experiences in establishing collaborations and networks.

Third, I also came to the conclusion that - besides these previous negative experiences - these network collaborations can generate new frustrations towards the leading organization. Lead organization-governed networks are highly centralized, brokered and are characterized by asymmetrical power (Provan & Kenis, 2008). Although this means that these networks are characterized by high levels of efficiency compared to other modes of network governance (Provan & Kenis, 2008), this also means that when all key decisions have to run through, and are coordinated by the leading organization, the inclusiveness of the decision-making process can be threatened (Provan & Kenis, 2008). The leading organization should avoid imposing decisions or making decisions behind the scenes, as this can have a negative influence on the collaboration between the network participants and on the professional autonomy as experienced by the practitioners (For more information, see level *4. The practitioners*).

This 'behind the scenes power mechanism' is not always clear because of the intense collaboration that often takes place between the leading organization and the next level of the network structure: the coordinator. The leading organization can hire or appoint this coordinator to assist in the day-to-day governance of the network. In what follows, I will elaborate extensively on the policy implications of these different governance roles.

2. The coordinator

In the following paragraphs, I shed light on the circumstances under which the different governance roles can be adopted (Span et al., 2012a). Within lead organization-governed networks, the coordinator adopts an important broker role (Burt, 2004; Edelenbos et al., 2013) between the leading organization and the network participants (i.e. the steering committee, the

workgroups and the practitioners). I find that the coordinator is better able to buffer the power imbalance that characterizes these lead organization-governed networks, while a coordinator can translate or mediate the requests, questions and uncertainties from both the leading organization and the network participants. By zooming in on each governance role separately, I provide an overview of the different network -, and participant characteristics that should be taken into account when adopting a governance role (see table in figure 1). These roles adopted by network coordinators can arise, grow and change in -, and adapt organically to different situations, different network participants and different network characteristics.

A. The facilitator

The facilitator is a coordinator who supports and facilitates the collaboration, without making any decisions (Span et al., 2012a). The decisions on issues that are up for consent are made by the participants, who can be held responsible for these decisions and for the functioning of the network. These participants thus have a certain degree of power and autonomy, while the coordinator's most important task is to support the collaborative processes.

First of all, when the participants in a network are highly committed to the network, which means that they want to invest time and resources (Provan & Milward, 2001; Skelcher et al., 2008), a facilitating coordinator will be the most successful way to approach this collaboration. As these participants are committed to invest time in the network, they are more likely to want to have input in the decision-making process.

Second, when the diversity among the different network participants is low, i.e. when participants have fairly similar backgrounds, experiences and expertise (Span et al., 2012b), I find that a facilitating coordinator will provide the needed support to reach a consensus among these participants. The fact that the coordinator only has to support this process without getting involved in the content, derives from the fact that the homogenous set of network participants is often more able to reach a consensus among themselves without exterior help or support.

Third, I find that when a collaboration between network participants and the lead organization is characterized by a negative history of collaboration, a facilitator deals with this situation in the most suitable way. The network participants in these networks experience a lack of trust towards the leading organization and the affiliated network coordinator, which stems from a fear that the leading organization might make too many unilateral decisions without involving the participants and without taking full responsibility for these decisions (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Provan & Kenis, 2008; Ran & Qi, 2017). To overcome these worries, they want to have the opportunity to provide input, to hold the leading organization accountable (Voets et al., 2008) and to influence the decision-making process in the network. A facilitating coordinator is able to create the opportune circumstances for that to happen.

Fourth, I find that networks that are characterized by high levels of continuity among the network participants and where the internal stability is thus higher, the coordinator can adopt a facilitating role. The fact that the network partners will get to know each other better as they are in contact with each other more frequently, implies that they will be able to collaborate more successfully. Here, the facilitator role will provide enough support for this to happen.

The last circumstances under which a facilitator role will be the most successful governance role to adopt, is when the main aim of the network is to bring together a number of generalist and specialist professionals and to optimize the exchange that takes place between these practitioners. I find that a facilitating role succeeds best in uniting the diversity of these service providers, while enhancing their professional autonomy. I elaborate on this matter in paragraph 4, *The practitioners*.

B. The co-producer

The co-producer role is a governance role that in theory as well as in practice falls in between the two other roles (Span et al., 2012a) and cannot be linked to the different network characteristics as straightforwardly as the two other governance roles. I find that there is an overlap between the role of facilitator and co-producer, although the emphasis and the implementation of these roles is different. Compared to the facilitator, I find that the co-producer – more than the facilitator - adopts a broker role between the leading organization and the network participants. In this respect, the co-producer role provides more room for the input of the leading organization. A co-producer is best able to provide these input opportunities to the leading organization without denying the participants their involvement in the decision-making process.

First, I find that when network participants are highly committed, a co-producer role can also be a successful way of approaching this collaboration, especially when the leading organization also wants to have a voice in the decision-making process. While the network partners are more committed to investing time and resources in the network (Provan & Milward, 2001; Skelcher et al., 2008), a co-producing role can complement this by also offering content related ideas or suggestions. This does not hinder the perceived and needed freedom of the network participants who want to have input in the decision-making process.

Second, when the network is comprised of a homogenous group of network participants (Span et al., 2012b), a co-producing governance role can also be successful. These participants, who are characterized by similar backgrounds and expertise, can reach a consensus fairly easily. A co-producer can apply the practice of synthesis, which involves one-on-one discussions with the different network participants. After these interviews, the coordinator unites the outcomes and presents the results to the entire network. Finally, the co-producer can guide the network in making a well-informed decision and in reaching a consensus. This process of synthesis can provide some support in reaching a consensus more effortlessly and makes sure that the opinions of all the different network participants are taken into account. Compared to the facilitator and the commissioner role, the co-producer takes charge of the process of reaching a consensus without imposing the decisions that have to be made.

Regarding the collaborative experiences in the past and the continuity among the network participants, I can conclude that a co-producing role might have a positive influence on the network when these two characteristics are at mediocre levels. When the network participants do not have particularly good nor particularly bad experiences with the leading organization and when there is some continuity but not exclusively, a co-producing role might be a good way to unite these network levels and different network participants without being to controlling.

C. The commissioner

Finally, a coordinator who adopts a commissioner role has a significant amount of power in the network (Span et al., 2012a). A commissioner has the mandate to make unilateral decisions about the different network aspects, which implies that the network participants have limited input opportunities and are seen as executors of these decisions (Span et al., 2012a). The lack of influence by the network participants also entails that the coordinator has the main responsibility and has to be able to account for the decisions and actions of the network (Span et al., 2012a).

First of all, I find that a commissioner role will be more successful when the network participants show low levels of commitment towards the network. When these participants experience less added value for their own organization, they will be less motivated to invest time and resources and to provide input in the network (Provan & Milward, 2001). This lack of commitment and motivation entails that the network often does not move in a clear and cohesive direction. In these networks, a commissioner can make the necessary decisions in order for the network to move

forward which can in time increase the sense of purpose and the motivation among the network participants.

Second, when a network is characterized by a large diversity of network participants, i.e. participants with different backgrounds and expertise who are active in different sectors of society, the network will often experience more difficulties in reaching a consensus on the network goals. In these networks, a commissioner will perform better as this type of coordinator can step up and search for a consensus among the heterogeneous network participants. Although this diversity can be considered as an important asset to the effectiveness of networks, it proves to be more difficult to reach a consensus. My research shows that in this situation, the practice of synthesis can offer a solution. When a commissioner uses this practice, one-on-one discussions between the coordinator and the network participants are organized. Based on these interviews, the coordinator synthesizes the information and formulates network goals. Different from the practice of synthesis as implemented by a co-producer, the commissioner has the final word in this process of synthesis. This means that after the coordinator has contacted all the different network participants and gathered their insights, wishes and needs, it is up to the coordinator to make the final decision. Although this practice provides some input opportunities to the network participants, it is still the commissioner who has the final say. In addition to these findings, I also emphasize that goal consensus must not be perceived as an indispensable condition for network success (Vangen & Huxham, 2012), but that collaboration is harder to maintain when the network is unable to reach a consensus. When this is the case, i.e. when a network is unable to establish a consensus on the network goals, network governance proves to be very important. Here, an important responsibility lies in the hands of the governing coordinator, who must ensure the functioning of the network by establishing a sufficient level of goal consensus while taking the diversity among network actors into account (Provan & Kenis 2008).

Third, when the network participants have a positive history of collaboration with the leading organization, they display higher levels of trust towards this leading organization and towards the coordinator who is appointed by this leading organization. Because of this, the network participants accept that the coordinator adopts a commissioner role in the network as they assume that this coordinator will make the right decisions and that the leading organization and the coordinator will take responsibility for the decisions that are made. Here, a commissioner governance role will lead to the required levels of accountability (Voets et al., 2008).

Fourth and final, when the continuity among the network participants is low, a commissioner role will be necessary in order for the network to be successful. In these networks, there is no stability when it comes to the representation of the different network participant which makes it difficult for these participants to get to know each other and develop a collaborative relationship. In this instance, the coordinator has to adopt a commissioner role to provide some continuity, stability and direction to the collaboration among the network participants.

3. The steering committee

The third level that makes up the vertical complexity of a lead organization-governed network is the presence of a steering committee, which can have an important influence on the functioning of a network (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Lindencrona et al., 2009). The installation of a steering committee can have different functions.

First, a steering committee often brings together the most engaged and committed network participants and meets more frequently (Milward & Provan, 2006). The participants of this committee want to invest more time in the network and they want to provide input. The fact that there is a place and a space for these dedicated network partners to meet and to exchange their enthusiasms, is vital if a network wants to flourish.

Second, a steering committee creates the place and space for discussions that are more related to the content of the network. In a steering committee for example, more time can be dedicated to discuss the theoretical side of the network development and the network activities, e.g. to discuss the concept of poverty and how this issue should be approached. A steering committee is often more involved in the creation of a network vision and in the demarcation of the network goals.

Third, a steering committee can influence the decision-making process and the power balance in the network. A steering committee allows the network participants to have more frequent meetings, which intensifies the collaboration between these members, the coordinator(s) and the leading organization. Due to this more intense relationship, the network participants are able to influence the decision-making process in the network.

Fourth and related to the previous issue, a steering committee also has a controlling function towards the lead organization. Network participants can feel the need to install a steering committee when they suspect that the leading organization would make unilateral decisions without consulting them. While these steering committees can have more influence on the decision-making process, they can also raise concerns more directly towards the leading organization. A steering committee can thus adopt the role of spokesperson and watchdog for the entire network towards the leading organization as it can draw attention to issues and shortcomings.

4. Workgroups

The fourth layer of the vertical complexity refers to the division of network participants into various smaller workgroups (Jehn et al., 1999; Chung & Hossain, 2009; Cummings, 2004). These workgroups often focus on specific issues and network initiatives or they can be organized as preparatory brainstorms on different themes. The installation of these workgroups has different functions.

First of all, workgroups are able to subdivide a large amount of network participants into smaller entities. Especially when the number of network participants is high and the backgrounds of these participants span over a broad range, it is often more difficult to include the input from all these partners into the decision-making process. In order to regulate this diversity and this large amount of network participants, workgroups that focus on one specific goal or project can be installed. Workgroups can thus increase the involvement of network actors that would otherwise not have a voice in the large and diverse group of network participants. The feedback and input that results from these workgroups can be brought back to the steering committee, who takes this input and the information into account to make decisions in collaboration with the coordinator and the leading organization.

Second, and related to the previous function of workgroups, is the fact that these workgroups often unite participants who are specialized in a similar topic or issue. Because these participants are united in these smaller workgroups, they are more likely to 'find their place' in the network while they are surrounded by similar and often more like-minded people. These smaller subnetworks can make participants feel more indispensable and more confident to exchange knowledge and expertise (Cummings, 2004). The homogeneity within these workgroups can create a sense of belonging and can enhance the trust among the network participants. This results in more efficient discussions and the participants are often more committed to these workgroups.

A third and final function of workgroups is that they provide a good tool for the implementation of decisions that are made in the network. These workgroups are often entrusted to deal with the practical implementation of projects, actions or specific goals that have been decided upon by the steering committee or the entire network.

5. Coordination at the level of collaborative practices

This last level regards the practices that are implemented through the professionals who actually work with the target group. The coordination of these generalist and specialist professionals, who are dispatched by the different participating organizations, requires a specific approach. The collaboration between these generalists and specialists adds another layer to the collaboration while the abovementioned levels are often comprised of representatives from the participating organizations who exchange information and set up projects, but who do not actually work together in supporting the target group directly.

Although it became clear that networks that are characterized by a large diversity of network participants are best to be governed by a commissioner, this is not the case for the level of the practitioners. In networks where specialists and generalists work closely together and are in direct contact with the target group, the exchange of expertise and knowledge between these professionals has to be optimized and their professional autonomy has to be safeguarded. This professional autonomy enhances both the quality of the provided services and it provides professionals with the ability to make critical professional reflections (Karvinen-Niinikoski et al., 2017). A facilitating governance role appears to best fit this task.

Safeguarding this professional autonomy while optimizing the exchange of knowledge and expertise between these professionals can be described as the most important task of the coordinator at this level. Through the organization of intervision and supervision meetings, a facilitator can optimize this indispensable professional autonomy and knowledge exchange. Through facilitating the collaboration, professionals are given the freedom to choose which advise, expertise and gained knowledge they adopt in their own practices towards the target group.

In this respect, the abovementioned five-layered structure also has to be questioned and its benefits have to be put into perspective. While the installation of these different vertical layers of complexity can enhance both the efficiency and the inclusiveness of a network, the presence of a leading organization can hinder the coordinator from adopting a facilitating governance role towards the practitioners who actually work with the target group. These insights have to be taken into account when structuring a network and adopting a governance role. More particularly, I argue that the collaboration between the practitioners can be approached as a separate entity from the rest of the network, i.e. that the structure and the governance role that is adopted towards these low threshold professionals can differ from the rest of the network. Here, the goal of the collaboration can serve as a good starting point.

Shortcomings and future paths of research

While writing this thesis, I also became aware of the inevitable shortcomings that accompanied this scientific research, as well as the research paths that remained undiscovered territory. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss these shortcomings and link them to future research paths.

Network euphoria

The persistent assumption that networks of service organizations are more effective at providing services to the target group than the individual organizations would be able to do on their own (Provan & Milward, 2001; Allen, 2003; Allen, 1998), serves as a starting point for the first critique that became apparent throughout this research. Some researchers rightfully question the statement that the presence of networks is "*something positive per se*" (Kenis & Provan, 2009, p. 440). Kenis and Provan (2009), for example, rightfully point out that research often lacks a critical perspective towards networks and that too little research has zoomed in on whether networks are actually effective and if so, under which circumstances. In this thesis, I took this critical stance into account by providing insight into the network process performance and by unravelling how these networks are actually organized and governed.

Allen (2003) pointed out that, although compartmentalized welfare services are unable to tackle wicked issues, joined-up thinking can bring along the phenomenon of 'holistic power'. This means that when networks of service organizations collaborate to fill the gaps in the service provision, they can shift towards a situation in which they can "*see everything, know everything and do everything*" (Allen, 2003, p. 304). This might seem like a condition under which the provision of services towards vulnerable target groups with issues on different life domains will be optimized, as the professionals are better able to communicate with each other regarding these '*cycles of exclusion*' (Allen, 2003, p. 304) and are thus more aware of the different aspects of the issues that clients are confronted with. This holistic power and the hereto related holistic practices can however have a controlling and disciplining effect on clients (Allen, 2003). The fact that the different network participants collaborate to provide a collective answer to the different problems that clients are struggling with, also implies that these service providers gain some power over the situation. As it is assumed that networks will provide a holistic answer to the wicked issues of the target group, networks are also more likely to individualize blame when clients do not live up to the networks' expectations, which can eventually lead to the exclusion of the most vulnerable clients (Allen, 2003, p. 287; Van Haute et al., 2018, De Corte et al., 2017). Besides this, the collaboration in networks can have negative implications on the clients' autonomy and privacy (Van Haute et al., 2018) and networks can eventually lead to more exclusion due to the negative experiences that clients have with certain service providers that are also active in networks (Van Haute et al., 2018) or due to the exclusion criteria that are often imposed in networks (De Corte et al., 2017). Longitudinal research by Glisson and Hemmelgarn (1998) even showed that collaboration in networks can have a negative impact on the provision of services, while De Corte (2015) pointed out that the impermanence that often characterizes networks can negatively influence the well-being of clients.

As it becomes clear that networks of service providers can have - besides the positive effects that have been highlighted in the introduction of this thesis - negative effects on the provision of services towards vulnerable target groups, I am aware of the fact that the perception of the clients of these networks has not been the focus of my research. Kenis and Provan (2009) and Provan and Milward (2001) pointed out that the unit of analysis that is taken into account in the research and evaluation of networks impacts the interpretation of the performance of networks. In this respect, I have to emphasize that while my research adds significantly to the understanding of network governance on the level of the network participants, the level of the clients' perspective

has not been my point of interest. And while other research has focused on this level of analysis (For example, see: Van Haute et al., 2018; De Corte et al., 2017; Glisson and Hemmelgarn, 1998), my research insights can provide a starting point for the connection between the client level of network analysis and the governance role that can be adopted by network coordinators (Span et al., 2012a). As I show that governance is essential in order for networks to perform well and that this performance is dependent upon the governance roles that coordinators adopt, future research needs to make the connection between these governance roles and the inclusion of the client perspective. Does the governance role that the network coordinator adopts influence the input opportunities of the network clients? The impact that these governance roles have on the input opportunities as experienced by the clients, serves as an interesting starting point here. Future research also has to provide more insight into possible mechanisms that coordinators can employ to enhance these input opportunities while also governing the network as a whole. Another question that is pertinent here, is the impact of these governance roles on the actual service delivery towards the clients of the network. As previous research has already pointed out that the formation of networks does not necessarily lead to better service provision to clients, the connection between network governance and service delivery at the client level has to be researched more carefully.

Social work in networks

Another angle that might not have received enough attention in this thesis, is the position of social work within these networks. As I already pointed out above, the connection between governance and the actual service delivery towards clients has to receive more attention. Also, while social workers are increasingly asked and expected to get involved in these networks, their position and possible influence in these networks should also be considered and explicated. First of all, social workers are in the most convenient position to advocate for the most vulnerable citizens, as they can adopt a *"role as agents of progressive social change"* (Craig, 2002, p. 677). On the one hand, poverty has become more of a private affair, on the other hand, social policy reform has put more emphasis on reaching certain targets, which too often leads to exclusion of the most vulnerable target groups (Craig, 2002). Social workers can play an important role in that they are able to adopt a position *"in and against the state"* (Craig, 2002, p. 677), which means that they can work within the frameworks that are provided and implemented by the state in the provision of services and support, and in the meantime adopt a critical position towards these policies and the imposed goals.

I argue that social workers carry two important responsibilities in networks among service agencies. On the one hand, social workers can support the emergence of collaborations to provide an answer to the fragmentation of services and the cracks in the service provision. On the other hand, they have the important task to act as an advocate for the excluded and deprived target groups that still fall through the cracks of the service nets that these networks are supposed to create. Social workers then need to engage in the debate among network actors on the processes of exclusion that appear in the collaboration of public and nonprofit service organizations. The rights-based approach serves as an indispensable starting point here, which social workers can base their interventions upon. I therefore emphasize that professional autonomy of individual social workers as well as policy support are indispensable to adopt this advocacy role. Future research should zoom in on these important tasks and how they are implemented in networks of service organizations.

Process performance: the right angle?

The network as a whole as the unit of analysis provides an interesting starting point for elaborating on a third shortcoming of this research. Although the main aim of this thesis was to unravel and get insight into how local networks of service providers are organized and governed,

I also gained insight into the performance of these networks. While Voets et al. (2008) argue that the research of network assessment too often does not go beyond a narrow new public management discourse, i.e. networks are considered to be effective and efficient when they reach their goals and in doing so, minimize the input and maximize the output, I followed their advice to assess networks by using a broader approach. Although process performance assessment is able to give more insight into the legitimacy, accountability and accordance within a network that leads to the success or failure of that network (Voets et al., 2008), I should also be aware of what remains underexposed by using this dimension.

Although the framework of Voets et al. (2008) provides a valuable addition to the assessment of networks as it goes beyond production performance and points out the importance of process as well as regime performance (assessing the robustness and resilience of a network), I argue that future studies should develop an approach where the impact of the network on the client-level is the point of focus.

In this respect, I argue – in line with the research by Mullen et al. (2005, p. 68) – that an approach that takes into account "*not only* [scientific] *evidence, but also client values and preferences, and professional experience and expertise*", is more suitable to get insight into the complexity, particularity and added value of local networks of service organizations and other social work practices (Boost et al., 2017). The shift from a narrow evidence-based practice to a broader evidence-based practice that takes other aspects besides (scientific) evidence into account, imposes itself. Vandenbroeck et al. (2012) argue that scientific research should be more in tandem with policy and practice as this will lead to more *democratic knowing*. In this line of reasoning, the gap between scientific research and policy and practice leads to '*undemocratic knowing'* as the focus of research is too often narrowed down due to the inarticulate requirement that research questions should be answered in a clear cut way, which leaves many relevant questions unanswered (Vandenbroeck et al., 2012). In this regard, Vandenbroeck et al. (2012, p. 549) find that evidence-based practice tends to ignore the voice and the perspective of actors that are '*out of order'*.

In this line of reasoning, I follow White (2009) and Boost et al. (2017, p. 154) who argue that there should be a shift from a narrow focus on evidence-based practice (EBP) - '*what works?*' - to a broad perspective on EBP where the focus lies on '*what works, for whom, why and under which circumstances?*'. Although I included different perspectives to get insight into network structures and governance, I also left several perspectives unobserved. As already mentioned in the paragraph above, the perspective and the experiences of the target group have not been included in this research, as well as the perspective of society as a whole. Boost et al. (2017) underpin that in the development of policies and practices, it is crucial to incorporate the experiences and the assumptions of the target group and practitioners. The CAIMeR-model (Blom & Morén, 2009; Boost et al., 2017) might provide an interesting starting point for future assessment of networks of service organizations. This theory provides a comprehensive framework that zooms in on the mechanisms of social work practices at different levels and provides an accurate theory on the core activity - working with the target group - of these practices (Blom & Morén, 2009). Boost et al. (2017), who focus on the evaluation of local social policies, add the level of the organization and the level of the network to this framework. Based on these recent insights, the research of local networks of service organizations should undergo a shift from narrow evidence-based practice approach to a more comprehensive and broad approach such as the CAIMeR theory.

The rights-based approach in networks

As my thesis focuses on the organization and governance of local networks that are installed in the fight against child poverty, I have to acknowledge that this last aspect, i.e. child poverty and

poverty in general, has not been addressed extensively. This critique is in line with Vandenbroeck et al. (2012, p. 549) who point out that in research, "*there is no openness for democratic debate about ways in which social problems are constructed, by whom, and why*". In her research, Warin (2007) confirms this by pointing out that networks are too often concerned with papering over the cracks in the service provision instead of re-constructing the foundations. In this respect, I plead for the establishment of networks that are able to provide people in poverty the necessary power and agency (Lister, 2004), that provide a more structural approach to poverty (Ghys, 2014) and that actively take the rights-based approach as a starting point for their collaboration.

In securing the rights of people in poverty and citizens in general, the rights-based approach to poverty serves as an imperative starting point in maintaining and strengthening mutual solidarity and collective responsibility instead of reducing poverty to an individual problem (Dean, 2015). The rights-based approach focuses on the collective realization of predetermined human rights through the installation of social policies that redistribute resources and power and by doing so, reduce social inequalities (Ridge & Wright, 2008). Poverty is seen as a structural societal problem that violates essential human rights, which citizens are granted "*just by virtue of being human*" (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 98). When applying the rights-based approach to child poverty, it is important to emphasize that the socio-economic background of the households in which these children are raised has an important impact on their well-being (EU, 2014).

This rights-based approach to (child) poverty should thus be considered as an undeniable assumption when collaborating in networks to jointly tackle this multi-dimensional issue and in poverty policies in general. However, the collaboration of service organizations in networks can trigger crucial discussions on whether social rights are being realized (Dean, 2015). While I already pointed out that consensus on these issues should not be considered as essential or as a goal in itself, it is important that networks provide the opportunity to discuss underlying assumptions and visions on poverty among network participants. Although my research pointed out that networks need to pursue a good balance between differentiation and integration (Buck et al. 2011) among network participants, I did not zoom in on what the actual differences between these visions were, i.e. on how and to what extent rights should and can be realized. I did not gain insight into how these participants perceive poverty and how they actually strive to tackle it.

I did however provide clarification on how to deal with the diversity that often characterizes these networks of service organizations. Networks that are characterized by a lack of consensus on, among other things, a vision on poverty (reduction) and how rights should be realized, need accurate governance to deal with this diversity and create a level of integration in order for the network to move forward. In this respect, the network coordinator needs to adopt the appropriate role to find a good balance between integration and differentiation. As I explained in this thesis, these governance roles can vary and shift organically according to the different network characteristics and the phase of the network. Also, the vertical complexity can facilitate the discussions through the installation of a steering committee. In this sense, a platform can be created to discuss visions on poverty while the setting allows to come to a consensus more easily.

In the debate that can be created on how to realize rights, the coordinator needs to adapt his or her role to the diversity that exists among these participants. This debate can be considered as successful when an arena is created to "*re-construct the foundations*" (Warin, 2007, p. 87) of poverty reduction policies and when they can establish a public and democratic debate with policy makers. Also, my research shows that, although there might still be dissension among the network participants, with the appropriate governance, networks can still be successful in implementing services and initiatives in the fight against child poverty.

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