

A STUDY ON GOVERNANCE

AN ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY
RELATIONS

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—Josh Lyman

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NEDERLANDSTALIGE SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de relatie tussen overheid en middenveld. In de academische literatuur wordt beweerd dat fundamentele veranderingen in de samenleving (verval van traditionele structuren en toegenomen functionele differentiatie) hebben geleid tot verschuivingen in de aard en positie van zowel de overheid als het maatschappelijk middenveld. Dit heeft bijgedragen tot het groeiende belang van alternatieve governance paradigma's (new public management, nieuwe governance theorieën) die de traditionele institutionele uitwisseling tussen overheid en middenveldorganisaties (MVO's) zouden kunnen destabiliseren. We presenteren empirisch onderzoek naar deze stelling door de relatie tussen overheid en civiele maatschappij in beeld te brengen in Vlaanderen, dat we beschouwen als een regio met een lange geschiedenis van neocorporatistische institutionele uitwisseling.

Dit proefschrift draagt bij tot de literatuur over governance en destabiliserend neocorporatisme door hoognodig empirisch onderzoek te leveren. We presenteren vier empirische hoofdstukken waarin we verschillende onderzoeksmethoden combineren die samen een uitgebreide studie vormen van het huidige institutionele landschap in Vlaanderen. Onze vier onderzoeksvragen zijn: (1) In welke mate is de neocorporatistische relatie tussen de centrale overheid en middenveldorganisaties beïnvloed door NPM-achtige hervormingen in Vlaanderen? (2) Welke organisatorische strategieën gebruiken middenveldorganisaties om te navigeren doorheen NPM-achtige hervormingen in de neocorporatistische sector van maatwerkbedrijven (WISE's) in Vlaanderen? (3) In welke mate is de relatie tussen lokale overheden en lokale middenveldorganisaties in Vlaamse steden beïnvloed door de evolutie van lokale governance? (4) Hoe pakken netwerken van lokaal bestuur 'wicked' problemen aan in Europese neocorporatistische steden en wat is de impact daarvan op lokale maatschappelijke organisaties en overheden?

Hoofdstuk 2 is een literatuurstudie die uit twee delen bestaat. In het eerste deel betogen we dat we overheid en middenveld niet als monolithische entiteiten moeten zien, maar dat we in plaats daarvan hun interne complexiteit moeten ontwarren. Er is dus geen sprake van een wisselwerking tussen *het* maatschappelijk middenveld en *de* overheid; in plaats daarvan is deze wisselwerking gebaseerd op een diverse realiteit van wederzijds versterkende of conflicterende relaties met verschillende actoren in zowel het middenveld als de overheid. In het tweede deel gaan we kritisch in op de literatuur over 'governance'. Zoals we in dit hoofdstuk zullen bespreken, is deze literatuur gebaseerd op achterliggende theorieën over de functionele differentiatie van de samenleving en het verval van traditionele structuren. De

governance literatuur stelt namelijk dat er in de moderne wereld geen centrale positie, instelling of systeem is van waaruit de sociale en politieke orde kan worden gecontroleerd. Deze stelling wordt meestal afgezet tegen de structuur van de vroegmoderne samenleving, waarin de overheid nog een positie innam van waaruit de samenleving kon aangestuurd worden. In de evolutie van governance, zo beweert deze literatuur, is hiërarchie (en de haar bijhorende bureaucratische staat) verdrongen door markten en netwerken. Wij formuleren een conceptuele, historische en normatieve kritiek op deze literatuur.

Hoofdstuk 3 presenteert de bevindingen van ons survey-onderzoek in drie sectoren van het middenveld in Vlaanderen (socioculturele verenigingen, gezondheid en welzijn, en de sociale economie). De onderzoeksvraag luidt: in welke mate is de neocorporatistische relatie tussen overheid en middenveldorganisaties beïnvloed door NPM-achtige hervormingen? Samenvattend vinden we in dit hoofdstuk geen destabilisatie van de neocorporatistische instellingen, hier opgevat als de gestabiliseerde uitwisseling tussen overheid en middenveldorganisaties. Wij stellen dat onze bevindingen aantonen dat NPM het neocorporatistische kader binnenkomt via institutionele gelaagdheid, waarbij enkele 'nieuwe' elementen aan het bestaande institutionele kader worden toegevoegd.

Hoofdstuk 4 bouwt voort op de bevindingen van het vorige hoofdstuk, en presenteert een casestudy over maatwerkbedrijven. Van de drie sectoren in ons survey-onderzoek is dit de meest waarschijnlijke sector om de impact van Nieuw Publiek Management te vinden. Maatwerkbedrijven zijn hybride organisaties die, in vergelijking met de andere twee sectoren in ons onderzoek, met meer marktachtige kenmerken opereren. De onderzoeksvraag in dit hoofdstuk is: welke organisatorische strategieën worden door maatwerkbedrijven gebruikt om te gaan met NPM-achtige hervormingen in de Vlaamse neocorporatistische context? Daarnaast hebben we gekeken hoe het huidige wetgevende kader tot stand is gekomen doorheen de uitwisseling tussen overheid en maatwerkbedrijven. In het algemeen illustreert dit hoofdstuk de institutionele gelaagdheid die aan het werk is via een hybride koppeling van beleidsprocessen, strategische interorganisatorische netwerken, administratief toezicht, markt-achtig management en markt-gebaseerde competitieve coping strategieën. Wat minder duidelijk is, is of dit betekent dat er een kwalitatieve verschuiving heeft plaatsgevonden in het markttype bestuur (d.w.z. een verschuiving naar 'meer' markt).

Hoofdstuk 5 richt zich op middenveldorganisaties in 14 steden en gemeenten in Vlaanderen, waarbij gebruik wordt gemaakt van een combinatie van kwantitatieve gegevens en focusgroepen. Het doel is hier de institutionele relaties tussen lokale middenveldorganisaties en hun lokale overheden empirisch te beschrijven en na te gaan in hoeverre nieuwe vormen

van middenveldorganisaties actief kunnen zijn in kleinere, niet-metropolitaanse gemeenten. Hoewel dit hoofdstuk niet representatief is voor heel Vlaanderen, identificeert het toch belangrijke tendensen en verschillen die van belang zijn voor de discussie over het lokale middenveld en lokale governance binnen ons steekproefkader. Over het algemeen vonden we weinig aanwijzingen voor een actieve politieke uitwisseling tussen lokale middenveldorganisaties en lokale overheden.

In hoofdstuk 6, dat een aanvulling vormt op het vorige hoofdstuk over lokale governance, wordt de vraag gesteld: *als er in Vlaamse steden sprake is van zogenaamde governance netwerken, hoe functioneren die dan en wat is hun impact op de maatschappelijke organisaties en de lokale overheid?* Het presenteert een casestudy van drie lokale governance netwerken in drie steden, die opvang- en integratiediensten bieden aan asielzoekers en vluchtelingen in het licht van de zogenaamde vluchtelingencrisis van 2015-2016. Onze casestudy laat zien hoe lokale netwerken functioneren als extra lagen bovenop de bestaande activiteiten van de lokale overheid en het maatschappelijk middenveld. De netwerken in onze casussen bouwen allemaal voort op bestaande interacties tussen lokale overheden en het maatschappelijk middenveld.

Hoofdstuk 7 geeft een kort overzicht van de empirische bevindingen, waarna we ingaan op enkele implicaties van ons onderzoek voor onderzoek naar governance.

SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

This dissertation examines the relationship between government and civil society. In academic literature it is claimed that fundamental changes in society (decline of traditional structures and increased functional differentiation) have led to shifts in the nature and position of both government and civil society. This has contributed to the growing importance of alternative governance paradigms (new public management, new governance theories) which might be destabilising the traditional institutional exchange between government and civil society organisations (CSOs). This dissertation provides empirical research into this claim by examining the relationship between government and civil society in Flanders, which we consider a region that has a long history of neocorporatist institutional exchange.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on governance and destabilising neocorporatism by providing much-needed empirical research. We present four empirical chapters in which we combine different research methods that together form an extensive study of the current institutional landscape in Belgium (Flanders). Our four research questions are: (1) To what extent has the neocorporatist relationship between the central government and CSOs been impacted by NPM-style reforms in Belgium (Flanders)? (2) What organisational strategies are used by CSOs to navigate NPM-style reforms in the neocorporatist sector of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) in Belgium (Flanders)? (3) To what extent has the relationship between local governments and local CSOs in Flemish towns been impacted by the evolution of local governance? (4) How do local governance networks take on 'wicked' problems in European neocorporatist cities and how does this impact local CSOs and governments?

In chapter 2 we provide a literature review of that consists of two parts. In the first part, we argue that in order to understand the relationship between civil society and government, we must not look at them as monolithic entities but instead disentangle their internal differentiation. *The* civil society is thus not interacting with *the* government; instead, this interaction is built on a diverse reality of mutually enforcing or conflicting relations with different actors across both civil society and government. In the second part, we engage critically with the literature on public governance. As we will discuss in this chapter, theories on the functional differentiation of society and the decline of traditional structures underlie much of the contemporary literature on governance. The governance literature states that in the modern world there is no central position, institution or system from which the social and political order can be controlled. This is usually stated in contrast to earlier modern society wherein government still assumed a central position as the command-and-control centre of

society. In the evolution of governance, this literature claims, hierarchy (the bureaucratic state) has been displaced by markets and networks. We formulate a conceptual, historical and normative critique of this literature.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of our survey research in three sectors of civil society in Flanders (sociocultural associations, health and wellbeing, and the social economy). Here our main focus was to empirically explore *to what extent the neocorporatist relationship between government and CSOs has been impacted by NPM-style reforms*. In sum, this chapter does not find a destabilization of the neocorporatist institutions, understood here as the stabilised exchange between government and CSOs. We argue that our findings show that NPM enters the neocorporatist framework through *institutional layering*, in which some 'new' elements are added to the institutional framework.

Chapter 4 builds on the findings of the previous chapter, and presents a case study on WISEs, a sector with the most likely case of New Public Management. WISEs are hybrid organisations that operate with more market-like characteristics compared to the other two sectors in our research. The research question in this chapter is: *what organizational strategies are used by WISEs to navigate NPM-style reforms in the Flemish neo-corporatist context?* Additionally, we looked at how the current legislative framework was formed through the exchange between government and peak associations. Overall, this chapter illustrates the institutional layering at work through a hybrid coupling of policy processes, strategic interorganisational networks, administrative oversight and market-type management and market-based competitive coping strategies. What is less clear, is whether this means that there has been a qualitative shift in market-type governance (i.e. a shift towards 'more' market).

Chapter 5 turns to CSOs across 14 cities and municipalities in Flanders, using a combination of quantitative data and focus groups. The goal here is to empirically describe *the institutional relationships between local CSOs and their local governments, as well as explore to what extent new forms of CSOs might be active in smaller, non-metropolitan municipalities*. While not representative for the whole of Flanders, this chapter identifies key trends and differences that are important to the discussion on local civil society and local governance within our sample framework. Overall, we found little evidence of active political exchange between local CSOs and local governments.

Chapter 6 complements the previous chapter on local governance by asking the question: *if governance networks occur in Flemish cities, how do they function and what is their impact on CSOs and local government?* It presents a case study of three local governance networks

in three cities, providing shelter and integration services for asylum seekers and refugees in light of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015-2016. Our case study shows how local networks function as additional layers on top of the existing operations of local government and civil society. The networks in our cases were all initiated by building on existing interactions between local government and civil society.

Chapter 7 presents a brief overview of the empirical findings, after which we discuss some of the implications of our research for the study of governance.

1 Setting the scene

Research design: problem statement, research question and methods

1.1 Problem statement

Understanding how civil society and government are related requires an understanding of society; in other words, a social theory. It is with the start of the 'modernisation' of society (usually situated around the end of the eighteenth century) that the fundamental issues of a social theory were developed (Wagner, 2001). Much has happened in social theories since then, certainly concerning the way in which government and civil society have been conceptualised and understood. Contemporary literature on government and civil society captures much of the dynamic between these two entities under the notion of 'governance'. This is at once a very distinct and very vague concept. It is vague because, in the enormous body of literature on governance, it sometimes seems that it means everything and thus suffers from concept-stretching beyond usability (6, 2015a). However, while some of these critiques concerning overly broad interpretations have some merit, the concept still has its own distinct contours because it is constructed on specific theoretical assumptions concerning the evolution of the modern world. The main assumptions are that in the modern world there is no central position, institution or system from which the social and political order can be controlled. As we will discuss in chapter 2, various social theories speak of a qualitative change in modernisation that has led to this situation. This change entails a complex issue: if society has no distinct centre, how then is a social and political change to be achieved? Is change then only possible in a haphazard way, emerging from the clashing of events scattered through society? Or can there still be some form of coordination in society through which social change can be achieved? Governance literature is a collection of theoretical attempts to analyse societal efforts at social and political order (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). Not all authors agree on the extent of coordination possible, ranging from very minimal interaction (e.g., Luhmann, 1997) to the coordination efforts of an engaged state that brings together multiple interacting self-organising networks and systems (e.g., Jessop, 2016) and those emphasising the new yet still strong governing capacities of states (e.g., Bell & Hindmoor, 2009). This very brief discussion shows how we will frame our analysis: given their societal position, how can we understand the relationship between government and civil society? If modernisation has indeed resulted in a decentred society, 'governance' implies that new methods of coordination between government and civil society are required in order to be able to achieve collective

social goals. Yet, before we make the jump towards the need for new institutions, there is still the matter of empirical reality.

The postwar history of the relationship between government and civil society has been viewed in public administration literature as a cumulative evolution from 'government' towards 'governance', usually divided into three phases or paradigms (Cepiku, 2008; Osborne, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Salamon & Toepler, 2015): Public Administration (the age of bureaucracy), New Public Management (NPM) (the age of markets), and New Public Governance (NPG) or new governance theories (the age of networks). Both NPM and NPG are in their own way a critique on the inert, compartmentalised and generally inefficient way that public services have been managed through bureaucracies. While NPM sees the cure for this illness in the healing qualities of efficient and effective markets, NPG emphasises how working in networks and partnerships can improve public services compared to both bureaucracies and markets. However, in many European welfare states, the idea of networks as innovative forms of governance does not fit with their history (Evers & Laville, 2005). Especially for those states with a neocorporatist tradition (e.g., Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, ...) it is more accurate to speak of welfare partnerships (Salamon & Toepler, 2015) that are characterised by the institutionalised exchange between government, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other social actors. In this context, CSOs do not only deliver services with the support of the government but are also, through a myriad of peak associations, actively involved in the policy design of these services in close partnership with the government (Evers & Laville, 2005).

This does not mean, however, that the reforms that have been introduced through NPM have no meaning in this context of welfare partnerships. Some argue that NPM-style reforms have had a considerable impact on these European partnerships (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Ascoli & Ranci, 2002; Bode, 2011; Klenk & Pavolini, 2015; Zimmer, 1999). This research suggests that NPM-style reforms have been added on top of the existing institutions, resulting in a complex and hybrid arrangement of governance institutions. Indeed, it adds to the evidence that the relationship between government and CSOs consists of situationally bound mixed forms of governance, whereby elements of different paradigms are combined (Osborne, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Competitive performance, hierarchical monitoring and coordinated policies can all coexist in increasingly 'nervous patterns of governance' (Bode, 2011: 137). Several authors have argued that institutional reforms in this regard almost always include some form of institutional layering as new elements are gradually added on top of or alongside existing institutions without dismantling them (Koreh, Mandelkern, & Shpaizman, 2019; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). This institutional layering is not a neutral evolution; as

new institutional elements are introduced, support for the original institutions tapers off and internal coherence can be reduced (Koreh et al., 2019).

Both governance theories and the neocorporatist model are expressions of the functional differentiation of society (Esmark, 2009; Luhmann, 1997) which states that society consists of different function systems, and no single function system (e.g., politics, economy, religion) holds the societal centre from which an ultimate source of power emanates over all other systems. Following on from this position, the governance of public services becomes a matter of intermediary institutions (Kjaer, 2016) which connect function systems and through which resources, power, authority and accountability are distributed. Neocorporatism is a model in which peak associations functioned as stable connections to coordinate between government, civil society and the economic system (Kjaer, 2016). While government holds an important central position in this arrangement, other social spheres do not lose their functional autonomy. However, neocorporatism was confronted by the so-called crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s, during which the unfulfilled promise of full employment and endless economic growth became apparent as demographic evolutions put the pension system under pressure and economic crises disrupted the political balance (Judt, 2006; Kazepov, 2005). A dual movement took place regarding the position of government: it became regarded as the root cause of societal problems (considered to be overly sluggish, dysfunctional and inflexible) while simultaneously being redeployed as an active instrument for the implementation of the new liberal strategies (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Wacquant, 2012). The relationship between government and the rest of society shifted from a focus on collective mechanisms of solidarity and welfare to regulation by competition and contracting (Kazepov, 2005; Kjaer, 2016). Thus, even though NPM attacked government for its flaws, it is itself mostly a top-down strategy (Fattore, Dubois, & Lapenta, 2012). Others have argued that this crisis enhanced the functional differentiation of society, making it necessary to place government in 'horizontal' and 'flexible' networks. Davies and Spicer (2015) argue that underlying the network paradigm is the assumption that networks are well suited for these sociological conditions: "(...) networks are purported to be beneficial because they provide a better 'fit' with macro environmental changes such as globalization, the restructuring of the state, individualization, and knowledge capitalism" (2015: 223). Yet, critics have pointed out that many of these networks can be considered especially suited for the further advancement of the aforementioned competitive liberal strategies (Davies, 2011a; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Thus, the problem unfolds as follows: fundamental changes in society (decline of traditional structures and increased functional differentiation) have led to shifts in the nature and position of both government and civil society. This has contributed to the growing importance of

alternative governance paradigms (NPM, NPG) which might be destabilising the neocorporatist institutional exchange between government and CSOs. This dissertation provides empirical research into this claim of destabilising neocorporatism.

1.2 Research question

This dissertation contributes to the literature on governance and destabilising neocorporatism by providing much-needed empirical research (Baldwin, Chen, & Cole, 2019; Brandsen, Trommel, & Verschuere, 2015). The leading research question of this dissertation is: *to what extent have evolutions in governance impacted (or destabilised) the traditional institutional exchange between government and civil society organisations?* We present four empirical chapters in which we combine different research methods that together form an extensive study of the current institutional landscape in Belgium (Flanders). This lead to four empirical research questions are:

1. To what extent has the neocorporatist relationship between the central government and CSOs been impacted by NPM-style reforms in Belgium (Flanders)?
2. What organisational strategies are used by CSOs to navigate NPM-style reforms in the neocorporatist sector of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) in Belgium (Flanders)?
3. To what extent has the relationship between local governments and local CSOs in Flemish towns been impacted by the evolution of local governance?
4. How do local governance networks take on 'wicked' problems in European neocorporatist cities and how does this impact local CSOs and governments?

1.3 The pertinence of Belgium (Flanders) as context

Belgium matches all the criteria of a neocorporatist regime, with high degrees of formalised exchange between government and CSOs (e.g., Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2017; Jahn, 2016). A clear illustration of this is the presence of the strategic advisory boards in which the Flemish government engages with representative umbrella organisations concerning a wide range of policy issues (economic, social, cultural, environmental, ...). Belgium also has one of the largest nonprofit sectors globally (Salamon & Sokolowski, 1999), with 12.3% of the total workforce active in nonprofits (in 2014) (Rigo, Biernaux, & Volon, 2018). In turn, the nonprofit sector in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, has the highest proportion of paid nonprofit professionals in Belgium (59.5% of all paid nonprofit professionals in Belgium work for a Flemish nonprofit) (Rigo et al., 2018).

In Belgium, this neocorporatist structure has historically intersected with a strong consociational legacy, the so-called *pillarisation* (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Van Den Bulck, 1992; Wayenberg, De Rynck, Steyvers, & Pilet, 2010)—tight coupling between CSOs, political parties and government representatives that is constructed around shared values or interests (Billiet, 2004; Witte, Craeybeckx, & Meynen, 2009). The Belgian state evolved around the evolution of three societal ‘fault lines’: religious-ideological (clerical vs. anticlerical), socio-economic (labour vs. capital) and ethno-linguistic (Flemish vs. Walloon) (Devos, 2016; Dewachter, 2001; Huyse, 2003; Witte et al., 2009). Around these fault lines, networks of organisations have evolved, ranging from organised labour and employers’ organisations to cultural organisations, schools and universities, media (especially newspapers) and banks (Devos, 2016). Pillarisation is then a vertical integration of these organisations along certain societal fault lines, leading to a compartmentalised society, whereby individual members’ lives are taken up from “the cradle to the grave” (Hellemans, 1990: 26): “Pillars spanned the whole person. One was born in this ‘world’ (e.g. in a catholic maternity) and a large part of life took place within the confines of the same pillars: school, youth movement, hospital, mutuality, sports association, cultural association, labour union, library, healthcare at home, elderly associations, political parties, ... were organised on a philosophical-religious ground. Contact with dissentients was minimal” (Huyse, 2003: 41). The power dynamic between different social groups resulted in a state system that was particularly adapted to containing social conflicts in these pillars, more than solving the specific policy issues at hand (Van Den Bulck, 1992). The crucial issue is not that conflict did not occur (in or between pillars) but how it was managed by a state system that could selectively deal with social issues, never confronting all three fault lines at once, resulting in balancing and stabilising state hegemony.

Although pillarisation reached its peak in the 1960s, some argue that networks between political parties and CSOs can still be of significant impact on public policymaking (Huyse, 2003: 41; van Haute, Amjahad, Borriello, Close, & Sandri, 2013), especially in domains such as health, social security and labour market (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016). According to Huyse, the primary characteristics of the pillars that were constructed around *philosophical differences* and *social closure* disappeared (Huyse, 2003). These gave way to the dominance of their, until then, secondary characteristics, of which the most notable was the central position of pillars in the state (Huyse, 2003: 375). Pillars became *political concerns* (Huyse, 2003) or *neo-pillars* (Hellemans, 1990): integrated professional networks of organisations occupying key positions in the institutions of the state. As such the Belgian state became characterised by a highly professionalised civil society through the yearlong structural support of the government, and a government that is tightly connected to CSOs (Hellemans, 1990).

Starting in the 1960s *new social movements* (Hellemans, 1990) organised around social issues that in their view were being ignored by the traditional pillarised CSOs: women's rights, environmental concerns, pacifist causes and international solidarity (Develtere, 2004; Hooghe, 2004; Stouthuysen, 2004). Many of these new movements evolved into successful organisations and developed umbrella organisations outside of the pillarised structures, with some considerable impact on the political and social agenda (Hooghe, 2004) and themselves becoming part of the institutionalised consultation system. In the 1990s, as society became further depillarised (with citizens no longer living their lives under the cloak of the pillars), the political position of pillarised CSOs was increasingly contested (Huyse, 2003). Instead, the role of CSOs in generating social capital became increasingly valued, especially with the rise of extreme-right politics in the early 1990s. As one researcher put it, the societal discourse concerning the role of CSOs at the end of the 1990s seemed to shift from reprehensible pillars (i.e., political) to praised civil society (i.e., community, social capital) (Billiet, 2004).

Meanwhile, the Flemish Region developed its own substantial powers with the further federalisation of the Belgian state. Importantly, the Flemish Region has mostly copied the same corporatist traditions from the federal level (Wayenberg et al., 2010), although NPM-style reforms were introduced by both the federal and Flemish governments at the start of the 2000s. These reforms fit a broader continental European approach as modernisers, in which administrative reform is built on the core elements of the traditional system with modernising elements, such as an increased focus on performance and results (instead of adherence to bureaucratic rules) and more citizen-oriented design of services (citizens as 'customers' of public services) (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). During the same period, however, extreme-right politics in Flanders was on the rise, and in academic literature, part of the problem was

identified as a lack of *social capital*. In Flanders, this led to a reframing of the role of civil society: no longer as 'political concerns' occupying state power, but as praised social actors providing society with the necessary means for restoring social capital (Billiet, 2004). Symbolic for this reframing of its role was the coining of the term *middenveld* (midfield) instead of pillars for the many networked organisations that were deemed suitable to take up this role. In sum, the argument here is that there is a double shift occurring in Flemish civil society: on the one hand an evolution towards more service-oriented CSOs; on the other hand, an evolution towards more community-oriented CSOs that are primarily focused on producing social capital.

Currently, recent policy reforms have introduced new market-type mechanisms in the governance of several nonprofit sectors, mainly stimulation through increased competition, pressure to gain more market-based income and the introduction of more market-type management techniques. In the domain of health and wellbeing, cash-for-care systems have been introduced which entail a shift from 'clients' to 'consumers' along with increased competition between service providers (nonprofit, social profit and for-profit organisations). In the social economy (here: WISEs), recent regulatory reform has introduced a unification of the sector, the centralisation of administrative monitoring and steering mechanisms through the central governmental labour agency and is expected to push towards a more market-oriented reintegration of WISEs' target employees. In the sociocultural domain, concerns have risen over the affirmation by Flemish policymakers that CSOs need to become less reliant on public funding, which resulted in an official white paper on alternative (read: nonpublic) sources for funding (Gatz, 2017).

At the local level, the most prominent form of institutionalised exchange between government and CSOs are the so-called local advisory councils. Legislation by the Flemish government makes the formation of these councils mandatory for specific domains (spatial planning, culture, youth work, sports)¹, and local governments are free to create others. These advisory councils deal with many different domains. Besides the four that have already been mentioned, there are also councils on environmental issues, agricultural policies, local trade, childcare initiatives, education, international solidarity, senior citizens, and health and wellbeing, among others.

¹ Since 2017, a separate advisory council for sports is no longer required. When a local government wants to abolish this council, they are required to integrate it into the cultural advisory council (creating an advisory council for leisure).

Recently, there has been a growing debate on the emergence of so-called new types of CSOs. This can be seen from the grey literature in Flanders produced by CSOs and others which discusses a range of CSOs that are active as local or urban 'commons' (Bauwens & Onzia, 2017; De Rynck, De Pauw, & Pauly, 2016; Hautekeur, 2017; Holemans, Van de Velde, De Moor, & Kint, 2018; Kuhk, Holemans, & Van Den Broeck, 2018; Van Meerbeek, 2018), for which different names are used besides 'commons', e.g., citizen collectives, citizen initiatives or citizen action. CSOs discussed in these publications are mostly active in domains such as climate and sustainability, local sharing economy, social inclusion, energy, food production or agriculture. While many of these publications succeed in shedding light on local initiatives that might otherwise remain unnoticed, we must also critically assess what this means for our research. Indeed, while they offer anecdotal evidence of new types of CSOs, there is very little systematic analysis across different cities and municipalities. Furthermore, many publications focus on larger urban environments but can only offer some indications of non-urban or rural environments.

The above illustrates how Belgium (Flanders) constitutes a salient context for the study of neocorporatist institutions, both at the central and local level. It illustrates the complexity and diversity of its civil society, as well as how the position of CSOs has evolved over the years to what some argue is a less political and more service- (Flemish level) or community-oriented (local level) focus (Billiet, 2004).

1.4 Research methods

Different research methods have been selected to answer each of the research questions. A full discussion of the methodology will be provided in the respective chapters. Table 1 below links the different research questions, methods and objects.

For the first two research questions, we will assess the relationship between the Flemish government and Flemish regional CSOs, whereby we focus on the impact on NPM reforms in Belgium. In order to assess the state of the current neocorporatist institutions (R.Q.1), large-scale survey research across different sectors in civil society is used to ensure that our findings reflect a wide diversity of CSOs. In order to research which organisational strategies are used to navigate NPM-style reforms (R.Q.2), we use a case study of a particular sector (WISEs), in which we combine semi-structured interviews of the leading managers of these organisations with our survey findings for this particular sector. For the next two research questions, we turn to the relationship between local governments and CSOs. Here, a second large-scale survey is used to assess the current relationship between local government and local CSOs (R.Q.3). We are also interested in understanding if and how local governance networks (with governments and CSOs) can contribute to dealing with complex social issues (R.Q.4). Here, we opted again for a qualitative case study, this time focused on local governance networks in three so-called central cities in Flanders (i.e., cities with a central role in their respective regional urban system).

Table 1: Overview of research methods

Research Question	Research Method	Research Object
R.Q.1	Survey research	339 CSOs active on the Flemish regional level
R.Q.2	Multi-method research: survey research + qualitative case study	51 WISEs (Flemish nonprofit sector) (work integration social enterprises)
R.Q.3	Multi-method research: population analysis (mapping), survey research + focus groups	Mapping: 1757 local CSOs Survey: 413 local CSOs Focus groups: CSOs and government officials
R.Q.4	Qualitative case study	3 <i>local</i> networks of CSOs and government (three Flemish cities)

1.5 Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation will continue as follows. In the second chapter, we present a discussion of academic literature, where we will focus on two issues. First, we will clarify how we understand civil society and government, both complex concepts in their own right. Second, we will engage with the literature on governance, a concept used to describe and analyse the relationship between government and civil society. We discuss the theory of society that underlies this literature, its evolution and some of the main paradigms. We end by stating three critiques and discussing how governance relates to the concept of neocorporatism.

In the subsequent chapters, we will present our empirical research, each taking on one of our four research questions. The third chapter looks at whether neocorporatist institutions in Flanders have come under pressure by NPM, using survey research of CSOs in three Flemish sectors of civil society. In the fourth chapter, we will look closer at one of these sectors: WISEs. We combine survey results with a qualitative case study to look at the organisational strategies of CSOs in a context of NPM-style legislative reforms. Next, we turn to the local level. The fifth chapter looks at the state of local governance institutions, combining a quantitative analysis of CSOs in 14 municipalities (using our population database and survey research) with focus group research in five smaller municipalities. In the sixth chapter, we focus on the urban context. Here we ask the question, when urban governance networks are at work, how do they take on local wicked issues and how does this impact local CSOs and governments? Finally, we reflect back on our research in chapter 7.

2 Literature review: disentangling the complexity of public governance

2.1 Introduction²

We started the first chapter by stating that in order to understand the relationship between civil society and government, a social theory is required that formulates our understanding of society. Are we experiencing drastic changes in the way civil society and government are related to each other, and if so, how can we think about these changes and understand their impact on the role and function of both civil society and government? These questions lead to important topics such as the autonomy of CSOs; the steering capabilities of government; marketisation of public services; the impact of formal rules on practices and strategies of organisations; the nature of partnerships and networks between government and civil society; the internal complexity and interweaving of actors from government and civil society; and certainly also the ‘messy’ reality in which politics and public service delivery take place. This chapter deals with these questions by engaging with international literature. It has two major parts.

In the first part we argue that in order to understand the relationship between civil society and government, we must not look at them as monolithic entities but instead disentangle their internal differentiation. *The civil society is thus not interacting with the government; instead, this interaction is built on a diverse reality of mutually enforcing or conflicting relations with different actors across both civil society and government.*

In the second part of the chapter, we engage critically with the literature on public governance. As we will discuss in this chapter, theories on the functional differentiation of society and the decline of traditional structures underlie much of the contemporary literature on governance. The governance literature states that in the modern world there is no central position, institution or system from which the social and political order can be controlled. This is usually stated in contrast to earlier modern society wherein government still assumed a central

² A draft of this chapter was presented at EGPA 2016: Pauly, R., De Rynck, F., & Verschuere, B. (2016). *The relationship between government and civil society: a neo-Gramscian framework for analysis..* <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8065871>

Corresponding CSI Flanders Working Paper: Pauly, R., De Rynck, F., & Verschuere, B. (2017). *Government and Civil Society: A neo-Gramscian framework for disentangling the complexity of governance arrangements.* <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8065871>

position as the command-and-control centre of society. In the evolution of governance, this literature claims, hierarchy (the bureaucratic state) has been displaced by markets and networks. We formulate a conceptual, historical and normative critique of this literature. We answer these critiques when we situate our research in the literature on neocorporatism and governance. We end with a discussion of our governance analyses in the next chapters.

2.2 Observing civil society and government

2.2.1 Civil society

Civil society has been discussed in a wide array of literature with many insightful contributions (Arato, 1994; Bunyan, 2014; Cohen & Arato, 1997; Edwards, 2014; Evers & Laville, 2005). The term ‘third sector’ is used often (Taylor, 2010), but concepts such as the nonprofit sector (Salamon & Anheier, 1998) or social economy (Evers & Laville, 2005; Moulaert & Ailenei, 2005) are also used. These different approaches all aim to capture the dynamics of a sector, social sphere or domain that is distinct from other social spheres, most notably government and markets (Cohen & Arato, 1997). Edwards’ study (Edwards, 2014) on the history and development of the concept has led him to distinguish three different approaches, which we discuss further in this section.

a. Civil society as associations

The first approach considers civil society as a distinct part of society that consists of those associations that are not exclusively tied to the spheres of government, market or family (Edwards, 2014: 19–20). This concept of civil society is often dubbed ‘third sector’ and is a key concept in literature on public governance (Brandsen, Donk, & Putters, 2005; Evers & Laville, 2005; Pestoff, 1992; Taylor, 2010; Van de Donk, 2008). At their core, these associations are usually considered to be voluntary private formal nonprofit organisations that have a certain public purpose (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016).

b. Civil society as the ‘good’ society

The second approach to civil society is to regard it as “a shorthand for the kind of society in which we want to live” (Edwards, 2014: 44), constructed around shared ideals and norms. This vision of civil society is remarkably different from the first perspective. Whereas the first perspective is a *formal* approach to civil society, the second perspective is a *normative* approach. This difference is important since it shows that associational life does not guarantee a shared set of norms and values of itself, and the normative integration of civil society is not

purely a matter of forming associations (Edwards, 2014). At the same time, *normative* integration does not necessarily mean that the actors in this civil society pursue social change in the form of *progressive goals* (democratic agenda, equity, justice, etc.) or even that they are acting according to certain notions of civility (Evers, 2010). As Edwards indicates, religious organisations are good examples of the diversity in normative integration, ranging from liberal to conservative, inclusionary to exclusionary, openness and prejudice (2014: 53). In a discussion of Gramsci's take on civil society, Buttigieg discusses conservative religious movements in the US as an especially salient example of how conservative forces in civil society can achieve important social and political impact (Buttigieg, 2005).

c. Civil society as the public sphere

In this approach civil society is regarded as the public sphere: "the arena for argument and deliberation as well as for association and institutional collaboration" (Edwards, 2014: 67). Where the first perspective was *formal* and the second *normative*, the third perspective offers a *political* take on civil society. There is considerable debate on how civil society functions as a public sphere. Jürgen Habermas' contributions have long dominated the debate (Edwards, 2014; Habermas, 1984, 1987). Habermas argues that actors are able to engage with each other in the public sphere through shared assumptions of the world, which Habermas calls the *lifeworld*: they share certain cultural assumptions, they assume that certain societal norms and rules will be accepted and followed by all involved, and they assume that each actor expects to be held accountable (Habermas, 1987).

This approach has been criticised for being more normative than analytical, a view summarised by Flyvbjerg: "This is the fundamental political dilemma in Habermas's thinking: he describes to us the utopia of communicative rationality but not how to get there" (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 215). Missing from Habermas' view on civil society is how power relations in society operate and how they affect social and political conditions. Antonio Gramsci takes a very different approach to civil society, focusing sharply on these power struggles in society (Gramsci, 2006). Gramsci's goal is to understand how political power is distributed in society through social institutions. Focusing on civil society in this regard gives us the insight that a strong civil society (in the first and second meaning) does not in and of itself lead to social consensus. On the contrary, an active civil society entails different actors in different positions with different interests, which makes consensus even more unlikely. A strong civil society is the basis of the public sphere (Edwards, 2014) and because of this, it only guarantees conflict (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Some authors even see conflict as a necessary condition of the political process (Mouffe, 1999, 2005; Rancière, 1999). Understanding civil society as a public sphere thus requires us to understand how conflict and power work.

d. Researching civil society: civil society organisations

Our research focuses on associations in civil society in a very broad manner, drawing from the dimensions discussed above. First, we will focus on associations, as defined as voluntary private formal nonprofit organisations that have a certain public purpose (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016). This public purpose is some form of *social or collective goals* and certainly means the organisations discussed in the first approach, but it also includes the normative dimension of civil society. In practice, this means that our research will focus on associations that have a certain *political role* (i.e., they pursue some form of social change) or offer some form of *public service or goods*.

These associations have to be initialised by actors from civil society and not from government or market actors. Since many associations have developed close connections to governmental institutions (through regulations, financing, oversight, etc.), this condition of voluntary existence of private initiative offers an empirical argument for demarcation.

It is important to realise that any conceptualisation of civil society entails blurry boundaries between government, market and civil society, and that CSOs can and do cross these boundaries. A good example of blurring boundaries concerns the social economy in Europe (Evers & Laville, 2005; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016), where the lines between CSOs and markets are not always easily drawn. These organisations are active in certain markets in the form of cooperatives, social enterprises or mutual-type organisations (providing services and goods for customers, e.g., healthcare, second-hand goods, landscaping services, labour market integration, ...).

The complementary approaches to civil society discussed in this paragraph highlight the importance of developing an analytical framework that is able to deal with a high degree of complexity as well as conceptual boundaries that are not always perfectly clear in practice. Additionally, civil society does not operate in a social vacuum but has many ties with other parts of society. Indeed, our research is specifically concerned with how civil society is related to government, which is a very complex concept in its own right, as we will discuss below.

2.2.2 Politics and service delivery

Our research focuses on CSOs that pursue a political role or that deliver public services. Of course, these dimensions are not always easily separated since public services can be crucial in the development of social and political goals such as equality, equity, justice, health, education, etc. (Osborne, 2010). When we talk about politics and the political, we are referring

to the often-used distinction between politics, polity and policy (Jessop, 2016; Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 2008; Palonen, 2003; Pennings, Keman, & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006). The narrowest conception of politics refers to policy and policymaking: the art of the possible. It concerns the specific collective choices to act (or not to act) on specific social issues. Politics is broader than policy and refers to the setting of collective goals and is not immediately tied to specific policy decisions. Here, politics is tied to how actors in the state (among which governments and civil society) construct collective goals. Politics is a confrontation of different social forces and different interests concerning the form of the state. This confrontation takes place inside the polity: “the institutional matrix that establishes a distinctive terrain, realm, domain, field, or region of specifically political actions” (Jessop, 2016: 17). In sum, the role of civil society in politics can refer to all these dimensions: organising services to implement policies, the influence on the development of policies, political representation and advocacy of specific groups, organising (agonistic) conflict or working towards institutional change.

Public service delivery is always part of politics: public services are part of the specific policies that decide ‘who gets what and how’ and form an important part of the construction of the polity. The fact that organisations are only instruments for service delivery, or on the contrary, that they are important partners in policy development says something about the political process. The way services are formed or implemented is determined by political choices. The key issue here is that public services do not occur in a political vacuum but actively shape the political sphere in which they operate.

2.2.3 Government

Government must be observed with the same attention for internal complexities as we have done for civil society. The point is that we should not only look at the relationship between government and civil society from a perspective of undifferentiated social systems or spheres. A good point of departure to understand government is offered by Heywood (2013) in his handbook on politics, where he distinguishes between three perspectives on ‘government’ based on its function, its institutions and its narrower meaning of ‘executive’:

Government in its broadest sense, refers to any mechanism through which ordered rule is maintained, its central features being the ability to make collective decisions and the capacity to enforce them. However, the term is more commonly understood to describe the formal and institutional processes that operate at the national level to maintain public order and facilitate collective action. The core functions of government are, thus, to make law (legislation), implement law (execution) and interpret law (adjudication). In some cases, the political executive (...) alone is referred to as ‘the government’. (Heywood, 2013: 266)

a. Government as politics: collective decision-making

In Heywood's approach to government, we can see the fundamental connection between government and politics. Earlier we have argued that politics is to be understood as the setting of collective goals. Thus, by arguing that government "in its broadest sense" refers to this same function, Heywood almost equates government with politics. The main difference lies in the added capacity of government to enforce decisions, which is of course the classical understanding of the distinctive monopoly on the violence of government. While politics refers to the social construction of collective goals, governments "are authorized to express and enforce" collective decisions (Moeller, 2012, ch. 8).

b. The many institutions of government

The second dimension in Heywood's definition consists of the *institutions of government* that organise the different authorities of decision-making. These institutions are the executive and the legislature, as well as police and military (as Heywood points out, 'government' is sometimes used as a shorthand for just the executive branch). Furthermore, there are also the many entities (e.g., departments, agencies) that administer government programmes in various policy domains (e.g., energy, infrastructure, health, education, culture, etc.).

The legislature is the institution that most symbolises the democratic character of the state (Devos, 2016). Together with the executive, it is characterised by the continuous interplay between opposition and majority (Luhmann, 1990). This is a dynamic that gives particular importance to political parties who in many Western European countries are very much the dominating force in political decision-making. In Belgium, political parties dominate so many aspects of government that the political system has been labelled a 'partitocracy' (Dewachter, 2001; van Haute et al., 2013) where parties "can be considered the effective principals in the polity, and many actors of the parliamentary chain of delegation, such as MPs, ministers, and civil servants have been reduced to mere party agents" (De Winter & Dumont, 2006: 957).

Political parties have been of particular concern in discussions on civil society: are they in or out of civil society? This debate has divided scholars, which leaves Edwards to conclude: "The only acceptable compromise seems to be that political parties are in civil society when they are out of office and out of civil society when they are in" (Edwards, 2014: 26). Jessop (2016) instead accepts the dual role of political parties and places them *between* civil society and government, constantly mediating between both: on the one hand, they represent interests of social groups and are part of the public sphere; on the other hand, they occupy positions in government from where they have considerable power over its institutions.

c. Different spatial scales

Government, in both its institutional and functional meaning, operates on *various spatial scales* (local, regional, national and international or global). It is, of course, not the same government at work on these different scales, as institutions can vary greatly. As a system of decision-making, multiple forms of government can be at play at the same time (for example, a national democratic government that is dealing with an international technocratic government). Thus, it is important to consider the relationship between local, regional, national and international institutions of governments (as can be seen in the large amount of literature on multi-level governance). The practical reality of governing has led to complex relations between governments on these scales, creating a variety of agencies and partnerships between them.

d. Politics and administration

An important distinction needs to be made between the political dimension of government and the administrative dimension. In a strict interpretation of this distinction, administrators would be considered as merely implementing policy under the full authority and responsibility of the elected political officials. In reality, room for operational decision-making is built into governmental structures through deconcentration via internal and external agencies (De Rynck, 2016; Mewes, 2011). Besides collective actors (departments, agencies), individual administrators are also worth considering. We know that administrators are not passive subordinates of the political executives but that they have considerable discretion in carrying out their tasks (Lipsky, 2010) and can even have substantial influence on policymaking and on the policies they are intended to implement (Prior & Barnes, 2011).

e. Observing government

So far we have presented various dimensions of government: its function (organising and enforcing collective decision-making), its institutions, its different scales of operation and some of its most important actors. The result is a high degree of complexity that clearly shows how government is anything but a monolithic unidirectional entity. Inside governments, contradictions, conflicts or mutual enforcements arise as much as they do in civil society—between local and national governments, between intra-governmental departments, between different agencies, between administrators, between departments and cabinets, etc.

2.2.4 Focusing on governance

A complex picture emerges from these insights into the different dimensions of civil society and government and the use of typological classifications. In civil society, there are many different types of organisations, from local to global initiatives: neighbourhood committees, grassroots movements, nonprofits that provide healthcare, education or social services, social

enterprises or even a global civil society based on civility (Jordan, in Edwards, 2011, ch. 8). All these types of civil society represent different interests, values and ideas; they take on different forms and sizes and occupy different positions in the public sphere. On the side of government, we find different levels of government with different authorities, agendas and resources; different actors inside these governments, on the side of politics as well as administration, who can have conflicting interests or outlooks; and different types of relations (financial, regulatory, oversight, etc.) that can conflict with or reinforce each other. *Civil society* is thus not merely interacting with *government* but this interaction is built on a *diverse reality of mutually enforcing or conflicting relations* with different actors of both civil society and government. This set of relations between the internally differentiated domains of civil society and government constitutes the core of our analysis.

Consequently, the next step we need to take is to show how we can analyse these relations. We still need a more general framework for understanding this relationship; in short, we need a wider theory of society.

In the following paragraph, we will discuss the literature on governance—a concept used to capture the dynamic between government and the rest of society in light of perceived changes in contemporary society. As we will discuss below, many authors believe that the government's role in society has changed drastically. The central idea is that government is dependent on other social actors to be able to fulfil its function of collective decision-making, also referred to as 'steering'. Its relations with the domains of civil society and the market are key to this function. Some authors argue that government can no longer occupy a central coordination position. Others emphasise the opposite and argue that government remains the crucial social arena for societal steering, if not as a central commander than at least as the central coordinator.

2.3 Governance

This section explores how the relationship between government and civil society has been studied extensively from the perspective of *governance*. Before we discuss this concept further below, we can define it in general as: "the process of steering society and the economy through collective action and in accordance with common goals" (Ansell & Torfing, 2016: 4).

The central idea in this definition is that actors in the political system together with actors in other societal systems (such as the market and civil society) piece together collectively binding decisions, thus involving processes of shared political decision-making and societally distributed public service delivery. A similar idea has been expressed by Meuleman: "Governance is the totality of interactions, in which government, other public bodies, private sector and civil society participate, aiming at solving societal problems or creating societal opportunities." (Meuleman, 2008: 11)

In academic literature, especially Anglo-Saxon literature, this relationship between the political system and civil society has been described in terms of a historical *shift* from government to governance, meaning that in the course of the last century, power over politics and public services has been transferred from central government to a wider range of public and private actors. In this literature, governance appears in *two meanings*: on the one hand as a view on societal steering; on the other hand as a distinct form of societal steering, namely network governance. In this dissertation we will argue that to study the first meaning (societal steering), theory should not limit itself to the second meaning (network governance). Indeed, the idea of a historical shift towards network governance is built on historical, conceptual and normative misunderstandings of the concept of governance, especially in the context of European neocorporatist institutional exchange between government and civil society.

We will first explore how this idea of a 'shift' is based to a great extent on underlying theories of modernity. Modernisation, a concept around which most of the early classical sociological science developed (Wagner, 2001), refers in general to the transition in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. This transition is mostly defined in terms of one or more processes of individualisation, secularisation, rationalisation, reification, cultural fragmentation, role differentiation and commodification (Laermans, 2003). According to many authors, these processes have intensified as modernity has entered its second phase, starting from the second half of the twentieth century. This new phase has been called postmodernity (Lyotard, 2010), liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), reflexive modernisation (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), risk society (Beck, 1992), or network society (Castells, 2010b).

We refer to these theories in general as post-structuralist (Marinetto, 2003b) or post-traditional (Lee, 2006) and will show that they have strong conceptual links to the academic literature on governance. These post-traditional theories argue that society has become structured without a centre, that power has become diffused throughout a wide array of actors and structures and that traditional institutions have become unstable and fluid. These claims are central to the development of the concept of governance, together with the idea of a large transformation in the way government and civil society interact. Key to this idea of transformation is the *displaced* position of government. This is most obvious in the literature on “network governance” (e.g., as critiqued by Davies, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b), and while we do not wish to dispute the important role that networks play in contemporary society, we do wish to qualify their importance and present some important critiques on the idea of governance as displacement. Following the general definition we have presented at the start, we want to discuss governance as a way of capturing the relationship between government and civil society in the sense of constructing collective decisions, which is an inherently political relationship.

2.3.1 Post-traditional theories

The two central themes that combine these post-traditional theories are the decline of traditional structures and, related to this, functional differentiation. We will present some of the central ideas of these two themes. The following discussion is not so much meant as an affirmation of these theories but as an exploration of the themes that connect these theories to the conceptual development of governance. Through these linkages we can ground our discussion of governance more firmly in the wider sociological theory, building towards our own critical understanding.

a. The decline of traditional structures

In social theory, the notion of society, and the place of the individual in it, has become increasingly problematic (Schinkel, 2007). The decline of traditional structures is a recurring theme in the debate on the relationship between government and civil society. An important theory in this regard is that of ‘reflexive modernisation’ (Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003; Beck et al., 1994; Lee, 2006), which states that society is fundamentally transformed into a second phase of modernisation: traditional structures that once seemed fixed have become uncertain and fluid (Bauman, 2000), although this does not mean that structures have become entirely obsolete (there are still rules, expectations, values, identities, institutions, ...). Several causes are identified: globalisation, intensified individualisation, transformed gender roles, flexible employment and risk politics (associated closely with the global ecological crisis) (Beck et al.,

2003). This has important consequences for the role of government and politics in society. In a risk society, politics cannot be managed by experts alone but has to rely on other mechanisms for dealing with risks: decentralisation, public consultation, public-private partnerships, citizen involvement and participation (Hamel, Lustiger-Thaler, & Mayer, 2000).

Already we can see how an underlying view on contemporary society is linked to ways of organising the governance of this society. In this strand of social theory, modernity has become reflexive in the sense that individuals have the ability to reflect more than before on the social order and their place in it (Beck et al., 1994). However, in this view on modernisation, society no longer offers clear integrating narratives; instead, it relies on flows of communications in fast-working networks, whereby traditional structures no longer offer stability of identity or meaning for modern individuals (Lash, 2001). Consequently, this loss of traditional structures means that individuals have to constantly build their own life paths (Giddens, 1991). Important for our discussion is that ideological, religious or cultural identification of individuals with CSOs is no longer self-evident, and new organisations and movements can emerge that are not part of the traditional social order.

This loss of stable formal bonds between individuals and organisations does not mean, however, that collective action has become impossible. According to Giddens (1991), politics also includes life politics wherein individuals connect social issues with their own life project of self-actualisation. Bang and Sørensen (1999) added to this idea by describing the everyday maker—a typically modern political figure primarily interested in political action, not because of an overarching ideology but out of involvement in specific issues in daily life. Again, we can see how a described decline of traditional structures is linked to ideas of governance, in this case through the linkages between individual life politics and collective political action.

b. Functional differentiation

The second idea that is important for our discussion is that of a decentred society, which is related to the above-described decline in traditional structures. In abstract terms, this idea has been formulated as *functional differentiation*, which implies that society is essentially without a centre (Esmark, 2009; Luhmann, 1997, 2013). In this view, society consists of function systems that operate autonomously from each other. This position reflects two ideas that are influential in many post-traditional theories. First, that society cannot be analysed as consisting of different parts that are integrated into a whole (Schinkel, 2007). Second, that no function system (e.g., politics, economy, religion) holds the societal centre from which an ultimate source of power emanates over all other systems. The implication of this theory is that the political system can no longer claim to be an integrating function of society. In its most extreme

formulation, one could claim that no political system (not even democracy) can include people in society because there is no society in which to include them. There is no *whole* and there is no *head* or *heart* that holds the societal *body* together. If one were to take up this theoretical position, it would imply a rethinking of how democratic politics functions (e.g., Schinkel, 2012). Without claiming an *a priori* position towards this claim, we wish to emphasise the link between these ideas and the discussion in governance literature on the shift from government to governance, which we will discuss later.

Another influential strand of social theory takes up this idea of a decentred society and has been influential in governance theories. It concerns the concept of networks in which individuals, groups, organisations or institutions can become important nodes, whereby the relations between the nodes form the core of analysis (Marshall & Staeheli, 2015). This leads to thinking about “governing processes that are not fully controlled by governments. Policymaking occurs through interactive forms of governing that involve many actors from different spheres” (Lewis, 2011: 1222). The idea that networks are the defining characteristic of modern society is often attributed to Manuel Castells and his theory of network society (Castells, 2010b), in which governments are only one of many possible actors to hold significant influence over power. Networks can also be approached very differently, as can be seen in the literature on so-called actor-network theory (ANT). ANT as inspiration for governance theory seems to be taken up especially by researchers on urban planning and urban governance (Farias & Bender, 2010; Rydin & Tate, 2016). ANT focuses on the construction of social entities, most notably the so-called nonhuman actants that other theories generally disregard. Through the lens of ANT, the city as an object of study “becomes a difficult and decentred object, which cannot anymore be taken for granted as a bounded object, specific context or delimited site” (Farias & Bender, 2010: Introduction). ANT is a view of society that turns the network metaphor inside out: “Society is not the whole ‘in which’ everything is embedded, but what travels ‘through’ everything, calibrating connections and offering every entity it reaches some possibility of commensurability” (Latour, 2005: 241–242). Society, and with it the idea of government and state, becomes deconstructed, decentred and finally, as Latour sets out to do, re-assembled.

The last theory we wish to discuss here is the work of Michel Foucault on governmentality, which still has a significant impact on the analysis of the relationship between government and civil society (Anjaria, 2009; Anwar, 2012; Fyfe, 2005; Jaeger, 2007; Roy, 2009). Foucault analyses how historically different forms of power have developed (e.g., disciplinary power and biopolitics) and how power is not limited to the institution of government but is at work throughout society. The governmentality approach highlights how all kinds of techniques and

procedures govern the conduct of actors (Foucault, 2008; Schuilenburg, & Van Tuinen, 2009). In a narrow sense, it refers to the forms of knowledge by which a state governs; in a broader sense, this approach emphasises the diffusion of certain rationalities of governing throughout society. As Dardot and Laval summarise it “[the] term ‘governmentality’ was precisely introduced to refer to the multiple forms of the activity whereby human beings, who may or may not be members of a ‘government’, seek to conduct the conduct of other human beings – that is, govern them” (Dardot & Laval, 2013: Introduction). Some authors have expressed the idea that neoliberal governmentality is a dominant force in key domains of our contemporary personal and social lives, thus affecting all kinds of institutions, such as healthcare, education, labour, family life, etc. (Bang, 2016; Dardot & Laval, 2013; Triantafillou, 2012). The central idea here is the widespread use and application of all kinds of techniques of self-governance. According to Bang, in a neoliberal society, the idea of self-governance can only succeed in “institutionally altering, modifying or adjusting individual behaviour and conduct so that it becomes more functional for the system and the variety of institutions that constitute it” (Bang, 2016: 70). In this regard, governmentality research raises questions on whether life politics (see above) can be capable of overcoming the supposed demise of traditional collective institutions. Governmentality research leads to insightful explorations of how these power dynamics are capable of contradicting or undermining the overarching claim of self-governance as an expression of freedom and choice (Dardot & Laval, 2013).

c. Neoliberalism?

Engaging with the literature on governance means that one will soon encounter a large body of work in which modern society is described as exceedingly neoliberal, if not in its totality than certainly in many areas of politics and social and economic policy (Bang, 2016: 70; Bevir, 2011; Dardot & Laval, 2013; Davies, 2011a, 2014b; Geddes, 2005, 2006; Ilcan, 2009; Jessop, 2002; Lang & Rothenberg, 2016; Perkins, 2009; Wacquant, 2012; Williams, Cloke, & Thomas, 2012). When reading the rich literature on neoliberalism one is faced with the complexity of the topic and the multitude of different approaches. As is the case with many theoretical concepts, neoliberalism has been defined in different ways and as such has given rise to a large debate on what it actually is (Dean, 2014). Here, we do not wish to present this debate, but instead, we offer an approach to neoliberalism that is most suited for the analysis of governance in this chapter.

It is through the concept of governmentality that research on the link between governance and neoliberalism has been most successfully developed. As Bevir notes, governance and governmentality both share a common concern: “they disaggregate the state, drawing attention to the diffusion of political power and political action, and exploring the porosity of

the border between state and civil society” (Bevir, 2011: 457). The concept of governmentality has been used to describe a certain set of techniques, practices and knowledge (what Foucault called *dispositifs*) that are so widespread in society that it is possible to speak of neoliberal governmentality. Central to these ideas is that neoliberalism constitutes a form of self-governance by which competition becomes the norm in all aspects of personal and social life, and personal freedom can only be appreciated through an entrepreneurial approach towards life (Bang, 2016: 70; Dardot & Laval, 2013). Neoliberal governmentality is considered a *global* rationality: “By this we mean that such a rationality is global in the two senses of the term: it is ‘world-wide’ in that it obtains on a world scale; and, far from being confined to the economic sphere, it tends to totalize – that is, create a world in its own image through its power to integrate all dimensions of human existence” (Dardot & Laval, 2013: 11).

Neoliberalism is thus more than an economic project of laissez-faire or capital accumulation, but it is considered a deeply political set of beliefs and strategies that impacts all aspects of life: “[The institutional core of neoliberalism] consists of an articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third.” (Wacquant, 2012: 71). Neoliberalism should not be equated with the retreat or diminishing of government, but rather, it concerns how government is an active mechanism in strengthening the reach of neoliberal ideas and strategies. The exact nature of these changes can vary with the concerns and focus of the authors. For example, Wacquant (2012) emphasises the penalising and disciplining aspects of neoliberalism, Bang (2016) illustrates how sets of institutions can empower or nudge individuals into doing what is most suited to the societal equilibrium, while Davies (2014b) focuses on how neoliberalism is closely connected to the coercive power of the local state.

2.3.2 Shifting governance?

It has become commonplace to start an overview of governance literature by stating that governance is a complex concept which is developed through a large volume of literature that contains many different approaches to it (Cepiku, 2008; Pollitt & Hupe, 2011) and has become so complex and maybe even overused that it can be hard to see why it is still useful for guiding research (Frederickson, 2007). As Perri 6 has stated, “If governance is everything, maybe it’s nothing” (6, 2015a). Despite the many approaches to the concept, the fact remains that it is an important concept in the literature on the relationship between government and civil society (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Bevir, 2007, 2012; Phillips & Smith, 2011) and therefore should be critically engaged with. Moreover, we find the concept still useful for analysing how government and civil society are related vis-à-vis each other concerning the construction of

societal collectively binding decisions and goals. In this manner, we wish to begin our discussion from a recently renewed effort at formulating a synthetic overview of academic literature on governance. In the *Handbook on Theories of Governance*, Ansell and Torfing provide a definition of governance that serves as a useful point of departure for the discussion in this chapter. Governance is defined as:

the interactive processes through which society and the economy are steered towards collectively negotiated objectives. The crucial insight is that no single actor has the knowledge, resources and capacities to govern alone in our complex and fragmented societies (...). Interaction is needed in order to exchange or pool the ideas, resources and competences that are required for the production of desirable outcomes." (Ansell & Torfing, 2016: 4)

There are many ideas formulated here, and in the following, we will unpack these through engaging with the academic evolution of the concept of governance. In the previous paragraphs, we have already outlined how certain theories of society permeate this definition of governance, specifically theories that propose the decline of traditional structures and the decentring of state and society. Several developments in the literature on governance can be identified that take up these ideas. In a review of the use of governance in public administration literature, Cepiku (2008) identifies how most literature develops a concept of governance by contrasting it with notions related to government and NPM. From a wider perspective, governance literature is focused on distinguishing governance as a steering mechanism in society that is uniquely different from hierarchies and markets. Governance has become a response to certain perceived developments in contemporary society (which we discussed earlier). The literature on governance tries to offer a view on politics and public service delivery that set out to be wider and more inclusive than the concept of government (Pollitt & Hupe, 2011). In this discussion, the leading distinction seems to be that between governance and government, which can be seen in how much of governance literature focuses more on the *process* of governing than on the *structure* of government (Klijn, 2008). Bevir offers a good summary of these core ideas of governance:

Conceptually, governance is less orientated to the state than is government, and it evokes the conduct of governing at least as much as it does the institutions of government. *Temporally*, governance captures changes in government since the latter quarter of the twentieth century. (Bevir, 2007: xxxvii - our emphasis)

Contrary to Bevir's statement that governance is less oriented to the state, governance literature has in fact at several times shifted its attention given to the role of the state—an evolution best described as the development of several conceptual movements: the move from government to governance, and the move towards metagovernance and bringing the

state back in again (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010). Bevir and Rhodes conclude with a third wave towards decentred governance, which chiefly refers to their own proposal for a renewed and decentred governance theory.

At the heart of our presentation of governance is the question of whether it is justified to speak of a shift from hierarchy to markets and networks (Bevir, 2012). First, we will present the basic idea behind the early literature on the shift from government to governance. Second, the notion of 'differentiated polity' will be discussed by briefly presenting the ideas of the so-called Anglo-governance school. Third, we will discuss how these ideas are used in a general model in public administration, as presented by Stephen Osborne, which speaks of an evolution from bureaucracy over NPM towards a so-called NPG (Osborne, 2006, 2010). Fourth, we will briefly discuss how the concept of metagovernance attempts at combining network governance with the crucial role of government and state in contemporary reflexive modernity. Fifth, we will conclude this section with three important critiques on governance theory.

a. From government to governance

Central to the discussion is the aforementioned notion of a decentred state, an idea that can, of course, only take form if one starts from a previously centred state. Most discussions on governance start by distinguishing themselves from the base model of the bureaucratic state (Pollitt, 2003; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Pyper, 2015).

Bureaucracy and hierarchy (Public Administration)

Bureaucracy is a model of organising public policy and service delivery with a focus on predictable rules (rule of law), a clear hierarchy of competences, a central command structure and a distinction between administrators and politicians (Eliassen & Sitter, 2008; Osborne, 2010; Pollitt, 2003). There are two important characteristics of the bureaucratic state that one must not overlook. Firstly, the bureaucratic state is a state that carries out its own policies instead of relying on third-party actors for implementation. Secondly, it has historically developed in tandem with the rule of law, securing both individual rights as well as mechanisms for collective solidarity. In the postwar years, government expansion was built on the social consensus that social problems necessitated active government intervention (Judt, 2006).

In the bureaucratic state, power over politics and public services is firmly situated in the government of a centralised state. The ideal-typical description of a Weberian bureaucracy as a rational process based on a clear hierarchy of tasks, rules and competences is, of course, always situated in a complex social environment. This social complexity is taken up in

Gramscian and Foucauldian literature which emphasises that even in a bureaucratic state, governments need to organise a power base outside of themselves in civil society (hegemony and domination) and build on specific power-knowledge connections with other parts of society (governmentality).

New Public Management

Starting in the second half of the twentieth century, bureaucracy became increasingly evaluated in negative terms for being sluggish, dysfunctional, overly centralised and inflexible (Frederickson, Smith, Larimer, & Licari, 2012; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Pyper, 2015) (Pollitt [2003] offers a good overview of these critiques of bureaucracy). A crisis of the welfare state unfolded as the promise of full employment and endless economic growth came under scrutiny, the demographic evolution put the pension system under pressure and economic crises disrupted the political balance (Judt, 2006). In a changing ideological climate, the government was now seen as the root cause of societal problems while simultaneously being redeployed as an active instrument for the implementation of the new liberal strategies (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Wacquant, 2012). Liberal ideology, stemming from “an earlier generation of pre-Keynesian liberals”, had now “re-emerged, vociferous and confident, to blame endemic economic recession and attendant woes upon ‘big government’ and the dead hand of taxation and planning that it placed upon national energies and initiative” (Judt, 2006: 537). This shifting ideological hegemony meant that governments were now seen as institutions that had to reduce the collective mechanisms of solidarity and welfare, and instead emphasise individual responsibilities, autonomous markets and governmental deregulation. Privatisation of public services was seen as an answer to bureaucratic inefficiencies; in general, the relations of government with the rest of society preferably relied on competition and contracting.

This ideological shift had a significant impact on public administration and management through the translation of these ideas into new concepts and policies under the umbrella term New Public Management (Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald, & Pettigrew, 1996; Hood, 1991; Metcalfe & Richards, 1990; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). An important consideration to keep in mind is that this movement to reform public management reached across the entire political party spectrum, from ‘new right’ to ‘socialist left’. The shared concern in NPM is the improvement of the three Es of public service: its economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Eliassen & Sitter, 2008; Fattore et al., 2012; Rhodes, 1994). In a seminal article, Christopher Hood (1991) argues that NPM presents itself as a universally applicable model (across countries, organisations, sectors) and as *politically neutral*—in this way, it is not unlike Public Administration. Hood explicitly approached NPM as a management system that is primarily concerned with the administrative values of frugality and economy (so-called sigma values)

(1991: 8), which leads to questions on whether NPM can be reconciled with other values such as equity and security. NPM is not a single set of tools and instruments, but a broad collection of governance techniques stemming from liberal ideologies which take aim at the way the bureaucratic state supposedly functions. The arsenal of proposed NPM-style alternatives includes a variety of techniques: “contracting out, decentralizing, granting greater discretion to managers, increasing citizen or customer choices, deregulating, organizing so that there is competition, and determining effectiveness according to outcome measurement” (Frederickson et al., 2012: 128).

However important and influential these ideas were, research shows that the actual implementation of NPM ideas and techniques varies greatly across states. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) compared reforms in public administration across European and Anglo-Saxon countries and synthesised their findings in four different strategies: *modernising* strategies (NPM-style reforms, but with a strong governmental role), *maintaining* strategies (safeguarding traditional mechanisms), *marketising* strategies (NPM-style reforms with a larger role for private actors) and *minimising* strategies (minimising the role of public institutions). These are dynamic concepts in the sense that one country is not limited to one strategy: elements of these strategies can be found in different degrees as some elements can be more strongly present than others. Strategies as well as the speed with which reforms are implemented also change over time, leading to a very dynamic view of public administration reform. In their discussion, Pollitt and Bouckaert point out that despite some differences, several European continental countries can be seen as having “a more positive attitude towards the future role of the state and a less sweepingly enthusiastic attitude towards the potential contribution of the private sector within the public realm” (2017: 118). Belgium and other countries that have a strong corporatist tradition of government are less prone to radical changes in public administration (2017: 73), which points to the important role of the close interaction between government and civil society in buffering the impact of NPM reforms.

Differentiated polity

Although NPM attacks the state for its flaws, it can be argued that it is itself mostly a *top-down strategy* performed by a central government (Fattore et al., 2012), whereby NPM is thus not a complete rejection of state-led governance but can rather be seen as another form of it (Pyper, 2015). In the UK in the early 1990s, however, a train of thought developed in which this movement towards NPM was interpreted not as a continuation of state-led governance but as the opposite. According to the so-called Anglo-governance school (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010; Marinetto, 2003a) or differentiated polity model (Rhodes, 2007), the government was becoming increasingly fragmented (Dunleavy & Rhodes, 1990; Rhodes & Dunleavy, 1995).

Rhodes argued that the state was being “hollowed out” (Rhodes, 1994) because of privatisation and contracting out, increasing use of arms-length public agencies, the transfer of functions to the EU and the limitation of public servants’ discretion by NPM techniques (such as performance measurement, managerial accountability, political control). The hierarchy that was seen as so characteristic of the bureaucratic state was supposedly giving way to markets and networks. Especially *networks* were perceived to be the new dominant organising principle, leading Rhodes to proclaim that governance should now be understood as *network governance* (Rhodes, 1996). In sum, the state was seen to be disintegrating into a patchwork of self-governing networks as a result of reforms implemented by that very same state.

In this Anglo-governance school, network governance can be summarised “as consisting of something akin to a *differentiated polity* characterised by a hollowed-out state, a core executive fumbling to pull rubber levers of control, and, most notably, a massive growth of networks” (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010, ch. 5). This notion of differentiated polity has been highly influential in governance theory (Marinetto, 2003a; Marsh, 11/2008) and marks the shift from government to governance in thinking about the role of government in politics and public service delivery. In this school of thought, the decentring of the state is the core assumption around which the notion of governance is built.

b. Networks and New Public Governance

Although there are many different conceptualisations of networks, they have reached a certain dominant status in governance literature (Lewis, 2011; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). According to Davies and Spicer (2015), a specific interpretation of networks dominates the literature: networks are assumed to fit better with current macro-sociological conditions of society (globalisation, decentred society, individualisation, ...) and they have supposedly expanded in multitude during the last few decades; networks supposedly operate on the basis of trust and are therefore well suited for open, flexible, democratic and better governance. Davies and Spicer also link this specific interpretation of network governance to the large body of literature on reflexive modernity and network society that we have discussed earlier. However, network analysis has a long history in many academic fields and is not easily pinned down to a singular view. Lewis (2011), for example, discusses a broad overview of network governance research that illustrates the wide variety of approaches, using examples of public administration, political science, sociology, social network analysis and organisational studies. Whatever the specific approach to networks, the fact that the concept dominates the research on governance is well established (6, 2015a; Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Bevir, 2012; Bevir & Rhodes, 2010; Davies, 2011a; Frederickson, 2007).

At this point in the discussion, it is useful to look at a schematic for understanding public policy implementation and public service delivery that has been proposed by Stephen Osborne (Osborne, 2006, 2010). This framework places different modes of coordination within particular governance regimes or paradigms, although they serve more as conceptual ideal types.³ Three ideal-typical governance regimes can be distinguished: Public Administration (PA), New Public Management (NPM) and an emergent New Public Governance (NPG). Each of these governance models is linked to its dominant coordination mechanism: hierarchy (PA), markets (NPM) and networks (NPG). Table 2 presents the key elements of each model. Osborne’s proposed schematic is useful for our discussion not only because of its importance in academic literature⁴ but also because it succeeds in synthesising the historical development we have presented above.

Table 2: Core elements of different governance regimes (Osborne, 2010: 10)

Key elements	<i>Public Administration</i>	<i>New Public Management</i>	<i>New Public Governance</i>
Theoretical roots	Political science and public policy	Rational/public choice theory and management studies	Institutional and network theory
Nature of the state	Unitary	Regulatory	Plural and pluralist
Focus	The political system	The organisation	The organisation in its environment
Emphasis	Policy creation and implementation	Management of organisational resources and performance	Negotiation of values, meaning and relationships
Resource allocation mechanism	Hierarchy	The market and classical or neoclassical contracts	Networks and relational contracts
Nature of the service system	Closed	Open rational	Open closed
Value base	Public-sector ethos	Efficacy of competition and the marketplace	Dispersed and contested

This table shows how NPG builds on the aforementioned theories of reflexive modernity and network society. First, “It posits both a plural state, where multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services, and a pluralist state, where multiple processes

³ While Osborne used the term “paradigm” in his 2006 article, he explicitly steps away from this terminology in his 2010 book: “[PA, NPM and NPG] are then denoted as policy and implementation regimes within this overall field – thus neatly skirting the above, rather redundant, argument as to whether these regimes are actually paradigms or not.” (Osborne, 2010, p. 1). And again, a page further down: “It must be emphasized that this book is not meant to propose “the NPG” as a new paradigm of public services delivery. It is neither that normative nor that prescriptive. The question mark in the title is deliberate” (2010, p. 2).

⁴ The 2006 article metrics show 189 citations via Web of Science; Google Scholar gives 789 citations for the 2006 article and 801 citations for the 2010 book.

inform the policy-making system” (Osborne, 2010: 9). Second, networks form the basis resource allocation mechanism, in which power is dispersed and unequal, making the value base of the model contested. The underlying thought is that because of the fragmented nature of contemporary society, policymaking has become a matter of interorganisational *networks* through which resources, power, authority and accountability are distributed. This approach comes close to the idea that collectively, binding decisions in society cannot be controlled by a centralised government but have to be organised through multiple self-governing autonomous social actors of which government is only one. In its own way, NPG was also a response to the idea of decentring by recasting citizens and public administrators in a new role and placing management and market-type mechanisms at the centre of public service delivery (Radnor, Osborne, & Glennon, 2016). NPG is “a broader paradigm that emphasizes both the governance of interorganisational (and cross-sectoral) relationships and the efficacy of public service delivery systems rather than discrete public service organizations” (Osborne, Radnor, & Nasi, 2012: 135). Where PA and NPM focus on administrative processes and interorganisational management (Osborne et al., 2012), NPG is a framework for a broader systemic governance. This does not mean that first-order governing is no longer of concern, but rather that social complexity demands analyses of second or even third order. We recognise here some of the concerns taken up by the literature on metagovernance (see the following section).

Osborne’s overview presents a good example of how the literature on governance has come to see networks as a new mode of societal steering, after markets and hierarchy. While for some, networks are the new dominant mode of steering, Osborne and others approach these modes more as a possible mix of strategies and institutions (Lowndes, 2001; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Indeed, these three ideal types should be considered as a cumulative evolution, where different steering principles build on each other and are often at work simultaneously: “Inevitably, such a tripartite regime model is a simplification – elements of each regime can and will coexist with each other or overlap” (Osborne, 2010: 2).

Osborne’s scheme points to the necessity of dealing with how manifestations of different paradigms can be at work simultaneously. Say, for instance, that organisations in social work are confronted by a government arrangement that is steering policy by both bureaucratic procedures as well as NPM-style performance management and public-private governance partnerships for some projects. What is the impact on the organisation, on its clients, on the social workers? How do these different principles of steering function in relation to each other? And how can organisations in social work be considered as partners in a network while simultaneously confronted with bureaucratic realities and NPM-practices and monitoring? Are

these mutually exclusive ideas? If not, what mechanisms are at play through which the involved organisations and actors deal with this complexity? Lowndes (2001) already emphasised how the idea of a shift from government (meaning 'hierarchy') to governance (meaning 'markets' and 'networks') was too simplistic. According to her, governance should be analysed as an increasingly complex "institutional mix" of hierarchies, markets and networks and she stresses that networks, as 'the new ingredient', should be taken into significant consideration (Lowndes, 2001: 1962).

Both Lowndes' and Osborne's take on governance as an institutional mix or cumulative evolution are still important ideas that will return in our own research model. Furthermore, several authors have argued that institutional changes such as, for instance, from hierarchy-based coordination towards market- or network-based coordination almost occur as 'institutional layering' (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). Importantly, this notion was developed in order to understand the shift from traditional welfare state systems towards more liberalised institutions. Institutional layering means that old institutions remain in place while new elements are gradually being introduced *next* to the old, instead of replacing them (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). This does not mean that the old institutions are not affected: by introducing new elements, the consistency and logic of the old system can be impacted, leading to a weakening of the original institutions. Layering can thus, over time, lead to adapting existing institutions to the new logic (Koreh et al., 2019).

This complexity of different principles of steering as well as discussions on the position of government in the complex web of actors, processes and social issues have also been taken up in governance literature with the concept of metagovernance, so we will first turn to a brief discussion of this literature.

c. Metagovernance: the governance of governance

There are numerous authors that disagree with the idea that governance necessarily entails a hollowed-out state, but instead still see government as an important actor, albeit in a different role to play: not as a command-and-control centre but as a coordinating actor in a wider network. This is what Bevir and Rhodes identify as a so-called second wave in governance literature, focused on *metagovernance* and a re-evaluation of the role of the state (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010). Sørensen and Torfing (2005) describe it as a second generation in governance literature that has accepted the spread of governance networks and is now focused on issues such as the conditions of failure and success, the regulation of governance networks and the democratic quality of networks. In short, metagovernance concerns the governance of governance.

Metagovernance is another answer to the complexity of governance modes, coupled with a concern for a renewed steering role for governments. Where the first literature on governance prioritised self-organising networks at the expense of the state, the concept of metagovernance 'brings the state back in': rethinking the role of government so it can still be a relevant and strong actor in politics, public policy and service delivery. As the governance of governance, it is concerned with balancing the three ideal-typical modes of governance (hierarchies, markets, networks), thus focusing on what we described earlier as the mix of governance modes. Metagovernance can best be understood as a higher-order observation of governance. Meuleman summarised these characteristics in a useful working definition that can serve as a first understanding of metagovernance as an analytical concept:

Metagovernance is a means by which to produce some degree of coordinated governance, by designing and managing sound combinations of hierarchical, market and network governance, to achieve the best possible outcomes from the viewpoint of those responsible for the performance of public-sector organisations: public managers as 'metagovernors'. (Meuleman, 2008: 68)

Metagovernance in this sense thus comes close to our understanding of governance in its general meaning of coordination of collective principles. Meuleman based this definition partly on the works of Jan Kooiman and Bob Jessop, both influential authors in the literature on metagovernance. In general, three schools of thought on metagovernance occur in academic literature (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009), which we will discuss here. Summarising the literature, Sørensen speaks of three approaches: hands-on, hands-off and indirect governance:

hands on through the facilitation of self-governance; hands off through political, financial, institutional, and discursive framing of self-governing networks, organizations, and groups; or indirectly through the presence of a strong shadow of hierarchy. (Bevir, 2007: 230)

The first school of thought focuses on metagovernance as management of the network. Crucially, in this theory, networks are seen as self-organising entities, leading to the conclusion that metagovernance can only work through indirect means of influencing the self-organising capacities of the networks (Meuleman, 2008). In this theory, networks are defined as a complex set of social relations defined in terms of different expectations, values, competences and resources. In order to prevent network failure, mechanisms are required that are able to manage this complexity, which is a characteristic specifically attributed to the state (Lewis, 2011). Network management in this regard entails "all the deliberate strategies aimed at facilitating and guiding the interactions and/or changing the features of the network with the intent to further the collaboration within the network processes" (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016: 11).

A second school of thought, exemplified by Bob Jessop (Jessop, 2002, 2016), focuses on how governance in different systems can be coordinated. The four main modes of governance that Jessop (2016) identifies are *exchange* (markets), *command* (state), *dialogue* (network) and *solidarity* (love). These can be considered the first-order modes of governance which all have their own possibilities of failure. When failures occur, second-order governance modes try to address these failures by either focusing on issues with the steering mechanism itself (the different modes) or with the conditions under which they operate (Jessop, 2016: 170). A second-order response to failures in governance can occur within the first-order institutions (e.g., market expansion in response to lack of profit), but it is the state that according to Jessop is best suited for “collibration” (his term for metagovernance): managing the balance between the different modes of governance in light of society’s collectively constructed goals. Jessop uses Gramscian and Foucauldian literature to argue that metagovernance affects the relations between different social institutions (state, markets, civil society). Furthermore, while the state has a privileged position to engage in metagovernance, its collibrative activities often evoke a considerable reaction from competing metagovernance activities (Jessop, 2016: 177). Jessop’s approach is closely related to theories that assume a decentred society, and his model places the state in a sort of ‘central yet displaced’ position: while the state’s central position in the social order is disputed, it is somehow the only domain in society capable of achieving collibrative coordination. Of particular concern for Jessop in the construction of the state’s influence and power is the role of hegemonies and governmental techniques. This approach to the position of government and state is partly the reason why in his earlier work he emphasised how metagovernance is a process of “muddling through” (Jessop, 2002: 242), whereby the state has to rely on processes of persuasion and its influence in the construction of collective intelligence as much as on its control over money, finance and law.

A third approach to metagovernance, developed by Kooiman (2003), presents a systems-theoretical perspective on metagovernance. Kooiman takes a decisively normative approach, starting from the position that metagovernance concerns “governing how to govern” (2003: 188). Governance in the first order is concerned with the way “governing actors try to tackle problems or create opportunities on a day-to-day basis” (2003: 135). This social construction of problems and solutions are in their turn embedded in “institutional settings”, which are governed in a second-order mode of governance (2003: 153). First-order governance is concerned with how problems and solutions are constructed and the mechanisms social systems have to reduce the complexity of this process. Second-order governance is concerned with maintaining an overview of how institutions (such as state, civil society and market) facilitate or limit the possibilities for the construction of problems and solutions. Metagovernance is then a third-order form of governance that deals with “normative

governance issues” (2003: 170). Kooiman argues that this third order is not a higher order as such, but that it is an added normative dimension from which to reflect upon the whole: “Meta governing is like an imaginary governor, teleported to a point 'outside' and holding the whole governance experience against a normative light” (2003: 170). Kooiman also emphasises that it is through metagovernance that the use of norms for reflecting on the different orders of governance is always susceptible to debate by those governed. This meta-reflexivity is an inherent aspect of his take on metagovernance.

These three theories all build on the notion of a decentred society in which government is no longer the central control centre but still is the only domain in society from which collective coordination can be achieved. They thus look for ways in which government can still play a vital role in securing some form of control over collective societal goals and strategies, despite its displaced position in society. Overall, in metagovernance, the preferred tactics are related to persuasive negotiation and other informal relations (Bevir & Rhodes, 2010). However, Davies (2011a, 2011b) rightly argues that the state still has more coercive measures at its disposal. Sørensen's indication (quoted above) of the shadow of hierarchy points of course to Scharpf's analysis of how self-organising organisations operate in the shadow of the state, i.e., in the hierarchically determined framework set out by the government (Scharpf, 1997). This shadow of hierarchy already contains the coercive powers at the disposal of governments, although at times in governance literature it seems to remain too much in the analytical shadows (Davies, 2011b, 2014b). Coercive measures taken by governments can of course also occur much more directly as, for example, in the use of police force in reaction to the early protests by the so-called *Indignados* in Spain, or in the forceful deportation of undocumented immigrants. Despite the fact that government can still rely on forms of coercive power in politics and public service delivery, metagovernance literature emphasises that its default position is that of coordination and persuasion.

In his extensive critique on network governance, Jonathan Davies claims that for those adopting the theory of network governance “metagovernance (the network governance of network governance) is the least-worst, necessarily imperfect, governmental solution to social complexity” (2011a, ch. 1). Davies argues that metagovernance is another form of network governance, and in light of our previous discussion, we agree with this assertion. Metagovernance is built on concepts that are well-attuned to the theory of reflexive modernity wherein individual and collective actors are able to act reflexively on their position in fast-expanding social networks, as well as to the idea that in a network society governing power is dispersed through these networks. This does not make the idea of metagovernance invalid,

but it does make it susceptible to the critiques on network governance, which we will discuss in the section below.

2.3.3 Three critiques on governance and network governance

We have argued that governance chiefly refers to the process of constructing collectively negotiated objectives in the interaction between different social spheres or systems, such as politics, economy and civil society. In this section, we wish to present some important critiques on the dominant position of networks in the current governance debate, as well as on the use of hierarchies, markets and networks as the main modes of governance in governance literature. First of all, we will clarify some conceptual misunderstandings in the debate on networks, hierarchies and markets. Our main critique here is that these concepts refer to different levels of analysis, and one should be careful to consider them as distinct modes of governance. Perri 6's recent discussion (6, 2015a) on bureaucracies and networks will be a key source for our discussion. Secondly, the claim of a historical shift towards network governance does not fit with the actual historical developments of European states. We do not wish to dismiss the qualities of networks as a useful concept for analysis, but we do wish to highlight some important critiques on the dominance of network governance. In this way, we want to put networks in their place (Davies & Spicer, 2015) and bring the complex interplay between different institutions to the forefront. Lastly, network governance is often built on underlying normative assumptions that should be considered carefully. Specifically, we will briefly discuss Jonathan Davies' argument that network governance has a strong neoliberal bias (Davies, 2012a, 2012b; Davies & Spicer, 2015).

a. Conceptual critique on the displacement of hierarchies

Our first critique starts from the central claim in network governance literature that networks have displaced hierarchies as the dominant institutional form. Even Bevir by now admits that this claim was overly dramatic: "hierarchical bureaucracies are still the dominant form of public governance" (Bevir, 2012, ch. 4). Bell and Hindmoor argue that "states have not been hollowed out and the exercise of state authority remains central to most governance strategies" (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009: 1–2). They present a wide overview of cases of hierarchical governance by governments (2009: 71–92). For instance, despite the influence of the logic of privatisation, state-owned enterprises are still numerous in several countries and even where privatisation has occurred, it has been accompanied by an extension of regulatory powers (2009: 75). In relation to many CSOs, governments rely on extensive auditing procedures, further strengthening the argument that hierarchies are widely important (2009: 76). Arguing against the claims made by the UK-centred differentiated polity school, Perri 6 states that in the UK,

hierarchy was still very strong in the same period that this school of thought developed its claims on a hollowed-out state and dominant network governance (6, 2015a: 61). Davies (2000) also found that in the period 1992–97, hierarchies and markets were still prevalent in UK local governments. Furthermore, Perri 6 argues that from the immediate postwar years up to the early 1970s, UK governments were frequently engaged in negotiations with trade unions, limiting the hierarchical powers of government through network strategies and tactics, thus before networks were considered to be important governance modes (6, 2015a: 61–62).

Bouckaert argues that at the turn of the twenty-first century, NPG consisted of a combination of network and hierarchical governance (Meuleman, 2008). As we have seen, Osborne also places NPG in a continuing cumulative evolution of governance modes. This is not to say that hierarchies are still operating in the same way as in the immediate postwar period and that states have not undergone any reforms. After considering several programmes of modernisation reforms in European and Anglo-Saxon countries, Bouckaert and Pollitt (2017) proposed that for some (mainly European continental) states, the neo-Weberian state (NWS) could be a better model to describe the impact of recent reform movements: “In essence, [NWS] was an attempt to modernize traditional bureaucracy by making it more professional, efficient, and citizen-friendly” (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011: 19). NWS is thus a model wherein government systems operate with hierarchical principles combined with certain standards of professional capacities, efficient management and the consultation of external actors (civil society, market actors, ...). Furthermore, we argue that this NWS model also leaves room for the possibility of a coercive state power—from an optimistic perspective as a guarantee for collective solidarity or individual liberties; from a pessimistic perspective as a safeguard for specific elite interests. When comparing NWS to NPG and NPM (as Pollitt and Bouckaert define them), it becomes clear these models do not operate through an exclusive mode of governance: NPM does not exclusively operate through markets, NPG not exclusively via networks, and NWS is not an exclusively hierarchical affair (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Contracts and marketisation can be pushed through by hierarchical authorities; networking partnerships can be established by centralised regulators and incorporate varying contractual agreements; hierarchies themselves often rely on informal networks and trust in order to achieve policy goals. Accordingly, the empirical reality of national governments cannot be simplified by assigning each government to a single model. Distinct policy domains might be in some regards attributed to a certain model, but the overall view of the public sector is a messy complex reality (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Again, the nuanced and complex mix of governance modes and institutions comes into view, on a conceptual level (models themselves are mixed) as well as the empirical level (reality is not a model).

Furthermore, the idea that networks have displaced hierarchies also implies that markets have not managed to take over the role that hierarchies once had, as was claimed in NPM literature and the accompanying liberal political ideologies. As we have seen earlier, markets were believed by many to be the answer to bureaucracy's failings and the crisis of the welfare state. However, hierarchical intervention often occurs when confronted with market failures, such as in the management of scarce resources, public health and social security (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009: 79–80). The shadow of hierarchy also points to the fact that many forms of privatisation are acted out under state oversight and control. The key issue is that these marketisation strategies and NPM policies have been designed, implanted and controlled by governments, positioned under its shadow of hierarchy. Bell and Hindmoor refer to Moran, who states that the current hierarchical modern state is “characterised by stronger central controls, and extensive auditing and quantitative measurement of performance” (Bell & Hindmoor, 2009: 88–89). This last claim is also supported by Perri 6, who cites the rise of new regulatory agencies in the UK that are constantly monitoring and assessing the delivery of public services (6, 2015a).

Perri 6 argues that claims about the displacement of hierarchies stem from a “theoretical misunderstanding of hierarchy” (2015a: 58). Hierarchies have often been confused with bureaucracies and coercion-based governing, while instead, they are essentially rule-based systems and as such, they can be coercive or bureaucratic but not necessarily so. He argues that hierarchy is an “ordered division of labour”, a distinct institutional form based on integrating values, norms, roles and expectations more than that it is based on domination and control (2015a: 67). Consequently, hierarchies can manifest themselves in many different ways and should not be reduced to instances of command and control. Hierarchical systems, according to this view, can function without issuing many commands or establishing strict control procedures. Furthermore, Perri 6 argues that hierarchies, markets and networks are analytical concepts of a different order. Whereas a hierarchy is a distinct institutional form in this view, markets are empirical descriptions of any event of *exchange*, which can thus occur in different institutional forms (2015a: 69). Markets are events of exchange between buyers and providers and can thus manifest as well in, among others, hierarchical settings. Consider, for example, the prolific use of government contracting of services and goods, “to the point that government procurement across the range of domestic public services is as hierarchical as it has ever been and probably more than it used to be, even in defence procurement during the great wars of the twentieth century” (2015a: 70). He makes a similar argument that networks are not a distinct institutional form. As opposed to markets, they are not empirical events but are an analytical tool for describing events in which nodes are related in sets of ties (2015a: 70). Consequently, networks are not exclusively tied to organising principles as trust

or self-organisation—these principles can be very well at work in hierarchies as well as in markets. According to Perri 6, this theoretical misunderstanding between the concepts thus undermines any claims of a historical shift, which in turn leads him to dismiss the notion of metagovernance as irrelevant (2015a: 71). 6 has written several articles in which he explores an alternative framework for analysing the institutional diversity of governing, which he builds on a Neo-Durkheimian institutional framework (6, 2014, 2015b, 2016). Using Durkheim's concepts of social integration and regulation, he proposes different types of institutional settings in which policy decisions take place (6, 2014), whereby each institutional form functions as a horizon of possibilities and constraints in which decision-making takes place. While these articles offer a coherent theoretical framework to replace the conceptual inconsistencies of the hierarchy-market-network thinking, they focus primarily on the internal processes of government based on historical cases in the British core executive and administration.

For our research, we take 6's critiques into consideration while staying focused on the relationship between government and civil society. This does not mean that we believe that networks, markets and hierarchies are irrelevant concepts, but we do not see them as the main modes of governance. Instead, the analysis of how governance is contextually constructed is our focus of attention. In this regard, network analysis can still offer important insights, for example, in analysing the role of informal practices in settings with a formalised division of labour.

b. Historical context

Our second critique is aimed at the claim of a historical shift from hierarchical governance towards network governance and follows from the insight that governance through networks is not a new phenomenon in the context of European welfare states. The idea that states have mostly relied on hierarchies before networks came along rests on two fundamental confusions. Firstly, as we have discussed above, the distinction between the three modes is theoretically inconsistent. Secondly, this idea ignores significant parts of the historical reality of politics and public policy, some of which we have already discussed in our first critique (as argued by Bell & Hindmoor [2009], Davies [2011b] and Perri 6 [2015a]). Many historians also point out that as far back as the Roman Empire, networks between state and private actors shaped important domains of the state (6, 2015a), such as the grain trade (e.g., Kessler and Temin [2007] argue that private merchants actively used their connections with state actors to ensure large-scale grain imports) or in organising tax and toll road collections (as Forrer et al. [2010] point out in their discussion of public-private partnerships).

Beyond public-private partnerships, network-based interactions between government and civil society also have a long history in European countries—certainly in the case of neocorporatist traditions as, for example, in countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria (Evers & Laville, 2005; Jahn, 2016; Siaroff, 1999). In his study on elderly care in Germany, France and England, Bode finds that “inter-agency collaboration as such is nothing new in this field so that *viewing (co)governance as a substitute for hierarchical government or market governance does not make sense here*” (Bode, 2006a: 551 - our emphasis). Furthermore, considering the possible expanding role of market-driven reforms in public services and the nonprofit sector, the so-called dominance of networks has even less empirical footing. Bode argues that this is precisely what is occurring internationally in welfare policy and healthcare (Bode, 2011). Moreover, in light of the previously discussed distinction between markets as empirical settings and networks as analytical tools, it is not difficult to see how networks are not *a priori* free from profit motives or market-type governance techniques. Networks and markets are not new phenomena, so analysis of the changes indicated by Bode should focus on how profit-driven exchange institutions can become the norm in public policy and not whether these changes should be categorised as markets or networks.

Not only in service delivery but also the field of politics and policymaking, governments have since long actively engaged with nongovernmental actors. A clear example is the governance of labour policy through dialogue and negotiations between labour unions, business associations and governments (Lijphart, 2012; Siaroff, 1999). In broader terms, many European welfare states have historically developed through the socio-political integration of government and nongovernmental actors (Siaroff, 1999). Specifically for Belgium, and especially from the early twentieth century up to the 1960s, this integration took shape in so-called pillars: vertical integration of organisations along certain societal fault lines, leading to a compartmentalised society, whereby individual members’ lives are taken up from “the cradle to the grave” (Hellemans, 1990: 26) (which we have discussed in chapter 1). A crucial element in this process is the close integration of political parties (and the political elite) with these pillars (Billiet, 2004). These pillars were resilient institutions since, despite the decline, traditional structures or pillars still functioned as strong organisational networks that have been described as political concerns (Huysse, 2003) or neo-pillars (Hellemans, 1990). The result was a state system in which political power was organised through a complex institutional setting, wherein these neo-pillars, via political parties and elite networks, took up a key institutional position between governments and civil society, and reaffirmed their position in key sectors (e.g., healthcare, education).

In short, the historically altering interaction of government and civil society needs a more nuanced approach to governance, particularly in the context of evolving neocorporatism. In recent years, several authors have contributed to our understanding of the evolution of neocorporatist institutions (Bode, 2011; Hartmann & Kjaer, 2015)

c. Governance networks: neoliberal and depoliticised?

A third critique considers the possible ideological and normative bias in models of network governance. In her review of the governance concept in PA literature, Cepiku finds that there is often confusion in international literature between the normative and analytical dimensions of governance and that more attention should be given to separating the two (Cepiku, 2008). Two normative pitfalls of networks as a theoretical concept are especially important given the research question in this dissertation: the critique that networks are essentially tools for soft regulation or liberalisation, and the critique that the interaction between governments and CSOs through governance networks eventually lead to a depoliticisation of civil society.

Concerning the issue of liberalisation, one bias that can be encountered is the equation of governance with the idea of a retreating government: a government with less influence than before, either as a deliberate political strategy or as a consequence of contemporary societal complexity. The retreat of government is often framed as neoliberalism whereby government gives way to market forces. However, as we have discovered, neoliberalism is a broader concept that can also be understood as an active state strategy instead of a retreating of government. We discussed these views earlier in this chapter (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Dean, 2014; Wacquant, 2012). Jonathan Davies (2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2014b; Davies & Spicer, 2015) has been especially critical of network governance literature, linking it to neoliberal ideology. Building on insights from Boltanski and Chiapello, he argues that networks are a crucial part of the neoliberal hegemony in the age of informational capitalism where the connectionist paradigm and the citizen-entrepreneur are celebrated and legitimised (Davies, 2011a). At the level of local policies, some authors connect this network ideology with the spread of competitive development strategies aimed at the facilitation of economic growth and the flow of capital (Peck, 2002) as, for example, in Harvey's work on the entrepreneurial city (Harvey, 1989).

Davies' critique of the network model is focused on the role it plays in the construction of the neoliberal hegemony in informational capitalism. Davies argues that in a neoliberal society, hierarchies take over where networks fail in order to ensure the hegemonic consensus, proving at once that hierarchies were never gone to begin with and that networks are mostly ideological vehicles (Davies, 2011b). We argue that this is a clear example of the conceptual

confusion we pointed out above. Hierarchies can be coercive but are not necessarily so, and hierarchies can integrate elements of exchange and profit (markets) as well as function in networked settings. Our view is that Davies observes governance arrangements too much in terms of a tension between hierarchy (coercion, domination) and networks (hegemony, ideology). We argue instead that focusing on how contextually situated institutions interact with each other offers more analytical flexibility than focusing on predetermined modes of governance. Indeed, in a later article, Davies and Spicer have developed their own view further, arguing instead that instead of “fetishizing” any particular form of governance, “a more agnostic approach to governance research” should be adopted (Davies & Spicer, 2015: 223).

Concerning the issue of depoliticisation, governance runs the risk of becoming depoliticised, i.e., the pursuit of a shared consensus dominates the networks at the expense of more deliberate and potentially divisive political action (Kenis & Lievens, 2016; Sørensen & Torfing, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2005). In public management literature, especially governance runs the risk of becoming a managerial strategy for achieving consensus (Davies, 2011a). Sørensen and Torfing summarise the issue clearly:

In [the public management perspective], governance is not a contingent power strategy but a *necessary response* to the functional differentiation of modern society and a *pragmatic tool* for solving problems through the creation of a constructive interaction of relevant actors in networks and partnerships that, when properly *managed*, secure a *smooth exchange* and pooling of knowledge and resources. Clearly, the focus on politics, power, and democracy is replaced with a focus on management, coordination, and effective problem-solving (2017: 37 - our emphasis).

While this argument is not without merit, there are authors that see the potential for politics in governance networks, usually more inspired by sociological and political science literature (Davies, 2011a; Sørensen & Torfing, 2017). A good discussion is offered by Kenis and Lievens (2016) in a study of a governance network in Leuven (Belgium), which aims to create a carbon-neutral city. Their study shows how a “discourse on partnerships, win-win situations and multi stakeholder cooperation” (2016: 1766) has led to a depoliticised outcome of the carbon-neutral city as a tool for city branding, while simultaneously enabling other actors to re-politicise the policy choices by re-symbolising the brand in order to “advocate radical sustainable alternatives” (2016: 1774). Instead of focusing on consensus and shared understanding, they see conflict as an essential part of governance networks: “Conflict and contestation (or to put it differently: politicisation) can enhance democratic participation and involvement, because they make clear that something important is at stake.” Without it, the network will not have “such a dynamising and mobilising effect” (2016: 1774). This crucial role of developing alternative narratives, visions or imaginaries for politicising governance arrangements has

also been argued in research on cases where collaborative or interactive governance was notably absent, and civil society actors had to break into the policy agenda. In an article on a large-scale urban development project in Antwerp (Belgium), Wolf and Van Dooren (2018) argue that a depoliticised discourse in order to avoid conflict has a boomerang effect: the conflict only temporarily disappears from view and can come back more forcefully, and the opportunities for mobilising citizen participation and contribution have been wasted.

2.4 Neocorporatism and governance: analysis of intermediary institutions

At this point we will take into consideration the implication of our three critiques on governance, which means we will have to provide answers to three issues: propose a conceptual understanding of governance that goes beyond the three modes of governance, build a historical and contextual perspective and work towards an agnostic understanding of governance to avoid the normative pitfalls of some governance models. In this dissertation, we argue that by establishing an explicit link between governance and the theories that we identified earlier (functional differentiation, the destabilisation of traditional structures), an evolutionary perspective on neocorporatism and governance becomes visible (Hartmann & Kjaer, 2015). This perspective places the relationship between government and civil society firmly in its historical context while providing a conceptual framework for institutional change (Streeck & Thelen, 2005).

Neocorporatism describes a system of interest representation that is of particular concern for understanding many European welfare states. Briefly stated, in a neocorporatist system, CSOs are not only service providers, but they actively take part in shaping the policies that regulate those same services. For Salamon and Anheier (1997), corporatist regimes are characterised by the preservation of social consensus through the inclusion of (parts of) civil society in the state structure, whereby large public-sector spending is combined with a large nonprofit sector. Neocorporatism as a term is also often used to distinguish from earlier anti-democratic corporatist systems (Bevir, 2007). In neocorporatist settings, CSOs are organised in representative peak organisations that, through various institutionalised channels, seek negotiated agreements with governments (Lijphart, 2012; Schmitter, 1974).

There is a difference in how neocorporatism is defined in most of the literature and how we approach it here. In a strict sense, neocorporatism refers to a system of interest representation dealing with economic issues and the labour market (Lijphart, 2012; Siaroff, 1999). In this

perspective, neocorporatism deals with the integration of the economy with other systems or spheres in society as well as stabilises the relations between employers and workers (Hartmann & Kjaer, 2015). However, the term has also been used to describe similar systems covering a wider range of policy areas (education, health, environment, culture, arts, agriculture, ...) (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Öberg et al., 2011). In this dissertation, we use the broad perspective on neocorporatism: the institutionalised exchange between government and civil society across a wide range of domains.

In short, then, a key characteristic of neocorporatism is that it secures a 'mutual stabilisation of exchanges' between government and other social spheres (Kjaer, 2016). This model of institutionalised exchange does not fit well with a linear evolution from bureaucracy to NPM and NPG. Yet, both theories share common ground as both governance theories and the neocorporatist model are expressions of the functional differentiation of society (Esmark, 2009; Luhmann, 1997, 2013). In a functionally differentiated society, governance becomes a matter of intermediary institutions (Kjaer, 2016), which connect different function systems and through which resources, power, authority and accountability are distributed. While government holds an important central position in this arrangement, other social spheres do not lose their functional autonomy. In this regard, both in systems of neocorporatism as in systems of governance, the analysis of these institutions becomes key to understanding the relationship between government and civil society.

Neocorporatism was confronted by the so-called crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s, during which the unfulfilled promise of full employment and endless economic growth became apparent as demographic evolutions put the pension system under pressure and economic crises disrupted the political balance (Judt, 2006; Kazepov, 2005). A dual movement took place regarding the position of government: it became regarded as the root cause of societal problems (considered to be overly sluggish, dysfunctional and inflexible), while simultaneously being redeployed as an active instrument for the implementation of the new liberal strategies (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Wacquant, 2012). The relationship between government and the rest of society shifted from a focus on collective mechanisms of solidarity and welfare to regulation by competition and contracting (Kazepov, 2005; Kjaer, 2016). Thus, even though NPM attacked government for its flaws, it is itself mostly a top-down strategy (Fattore et al., 2012). Others have argued that this crisis enhanced the functional differentiation of society, making it necessary to situate government in horizontal and flexible networks. Davies and Spicer (2015) argue that underlying the network paradigm is the assumption that networks are well suited for these sociological conditions: "Networks are purported to be beneficial because they

provide a better 'fit' with macro environmental changes such as globalization, the restructuring of the state, individualization, and knowledge capitalism" (2015: 223).

There has also been empirical research that argues that neocorporatist institutions have been destabilised, especially by NPM-style reforms. Based on his research in Germany and France, Bode states that "the logics of competition and rivalry, entrance and exit, bargaining and instrumental behavior" are fuelling a "creeping marketization" of welfare state partnerships (Bode, 2011: 116). Other research in Germany, Italy and the UK found a "transnational movement towards quasi-marketization and managerialization" (Klenk & Pavolini, 2015: 253). Bode, Klenk and Pavolini also highlight that differences between countries and sectors remain important (Bode & Brandsen, 2014; Klenk & Pavolini, 2015): even though similar techniques are used across sectors and countries, their application and use have to be considered in light of institutional, political and cultural contexts. As stated elsewhere, "There is no global model (...), and there is no distinct, homogeneous continental European model either" (Pollitt, van Thiel, & Homburg, 2007: 198). Earlier we discussed the comparative research by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), which shows that in countries with a strong neocorporatist tradition, NPM-style reforms have had a more moderate impact, which could point to the important role of the close interaction between government and civil society in buffering the impact of NPM reforms.

This evolution and possible destabilisation of neocorporatism should be understood as a "cumulative model of social change", as Kjaer rightly emphasises (2015: 18) in a passage that echoes the literature on institutional change and institutional layering. Several authors have argued that institutional reforms in this regard almost always include some form of institutional layering as new elements are gradually added on top of or alongside existing institutions without dismantling them (Koreh et al., 2019; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). Lowndes (2001) emphasises that governance should be considered a mix of different steering principles, as does Osborne (2006, 2010) in his overview of ideal-typical governance models. Importantly, institutional layering in modern society is taking place in a situation of increasingly permeable boundaries between civil society, markets and governments. In this context, hybridity is not only the permanent state of CSOs, but also of the governance arrangement as a whole (Brandsen et al., 2005; Hustinx, Verschuere, & De Corte, 2014). The welfare system has become increasingly hybrid with "complex and ever-changing interaction between politics, the economy, associations, and private households" (Verschraege in Hartmann & Kjaer, 2015: 107). However, institutional layering is not a neutral evolution: as new institutional elements are introduced, support for the original institutions tapers off and internal coherence can be reduced (Koreh et al., 2019). For sure, the impact of marketisation and NPM-style reforms can have a considerable impact on the social functions of CSOs in the

form of a mission drift away from community building, preferring service delivery over advocacy, or increased managerialism (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 2016; Suykens, De Rynck, & Verschuere, 2018). Of particular consequence is the development of more entrepreneurial orientations (Bode & Brandsen, 2014) of CSOs at the expense of their community or advocacy roles.

The question of whether incremental reforms are adding up to a gradual but fundamental institutional change is a difficult one but stands at the core of the discussion. This is why Bode (2011) speaks of a “creeping marketisation”, where he concludes that changes in both Germany and France resulted in “a hybrid mix of quasi-market governance and agreement-based regulation” (2011: 135). Streeck and Thelen (2005) refer to other research (e.g., in France and Germany) in which gradual incremental changes in the fringe accumulated to a transformative shift towards further liberalisation of the broader welfare system. The same logic applies to the gradual emergence of governance networks that might be replacing neocorporatist exchange with more collaborative interactions (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016), where gradual changes can have a significant impact on the process and outcome of the interaction between government and civil society (which we have identified in our third network critique as issues of neoliberalisation and depoliticisation). In sum, institutional layering can have significant consequences, as new logics are introduced in existing neocorporatist institutions, which could lead to displacement or conversion (Koreh et al., 2019; Streeck & Thelen, 2005).

This chapter has situated governance as a concept in the wider literature on the evolution of modern society in the form of increased functional differentiation of society and the decline of traditional structures. Both neocorporatism and governance are expressions of this functional differentiation, and many authors argue that governance is gradually replacing (or has already replaced) the traditional postwar neocorporatist institutions. This has contributed to the growing importance of alternative governance paradigms (NPM, NPG) which might be destabilising the neocorporatist institutional exchange between government and CSOs. Empirical analysis of neocorporatist institutions can offer more insight into this debate by establishing to what extent NPM-style or NPG-style institutional elements operate alongside or on top of neocorporatist institutions. Accordingly, this dissertation examines such institutional arrangements in a typical neocorporatist context (Belgium) through a multi-method research agenda on both the central (Flemish) regional level as well as the local (municipal) level. We will present analyses of both the governance institutions and organisational strategies within their respective institutional context. Our research is built on this institutional lens, given our goal of understanding the state of neocorporatist institutions. As Kjaer argues:

“Intermediary institutions possess a strategic location in society, and (...) the study of such institutions thus has an intrinsic heuristic value because it provides an optimal access point for understanding the more general transformations which society is going through” (Hartmann & Kjaer, 2015: 2).

3 Changing neocorporatist institutions? Examining the relationship between government and civil society organisations in Belgium

Survey research on 339 CSOs in Flanders

3.1 Problem statement and research question⁵

The nature of the relationship between governments and CSOs has been part of a wide debate for many years. The postwar history of this relationship has been viewed in PA literature as a cumulative evolution from government towards governance, usually divided into three phases or paradigms (Cepiku, 2008; S. P. Osborne, 2010; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Salamon & Toepler, 2015): PA (the age of bureaucracy), NPM (the age of markets), and NPG or new governance theories (the age of networks). Both NPM and NPG are in their own way a critique on the inert, compartmentalised, and generally inefficient way that public services have been managed through bureaucracies. While NPM sees the cure for this illness in the healing qualities of efficient and effective markets, NPG emphasises how working in networks and partnerships can improve public services compared to both bureaucracies and markets. However, in many European welfare states, the idea of networks as innovative forms of governance does not fit with their history (Evers & Laville, 2005). Especially for those states with a neocorporatist tradition (e.g., Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, ...), it is more accurate to speak of welfare partnerships (Salamon & Toepler, 2015), characterised by the institutionalised exchange between government, civil society and other social actors. In this context, CSOs do not only deliver services with the support of government but are also, through a myriad of peak associations, actively involved in the policy design of these services in close partnership with government (Evers & Laville, 2005).

This does not mean, however, that the reforms that have been introduced through NPM have no meaning in this context of welfare partnerships. Indeed, some argue that NPM-style

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reforms have had a considerable impact on these European partnerships (Aiken & Bode, 2009; Ascoli & Ranci, 2002; Bode, 2011; Klenk & Pavolini, 2015; Zimmer, 1999). This research suggests that NPM-style reforms have been added to the existing institutions, resulting in a complex and hybrid arrangement of governance institutions. Indeed, it adds to the evidence that the relationship between government and CSOs consists of situationally bound mixed forms of governance, whereby elements of different paradigms are combined (Osborne, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Competitive performance, hierarchical monitoring and coordinated policies can all coexist in increasingly “nervous patterns of governance” (Bode, 2011: 137).

The question addressed in this article is to empirically explore to what extent the neocorporatist relationship between government and CSOs has been impacted by NPM-style reforms. This article presents the results of survey research with CSOs in Belgium, a typical example of a corporatist welfare state (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016). Our data is drawn from a large-scale database co-produced by the authors, containing a wide variety of Belgian (Flemish) CSOs (2475 organisations) of which 496 have participated in an extensive survey. This survey collected the responses of the leading managers of these CSOs, and thus presents their perceptions concerning their organisation. Thus, we provide an empirical test for the current state of a governance arrangement in a region considered to be neocorporatist, making it relevant for the wider discussion on the changing nature of neocorporatist relations between government and CSOs.

In the following paragraphs, we will first discuss the concepts of neocorporatism and governance. Then we will present a brief overview of the developments in Belgium. Next, we will present our methodology, including a discussion of the measured variables. We will then present our findings, comparing the results between sectors. Finally, we will discuss some of the implications of our findings.

3.1.1 From neocorporatism to governance?

Neocorporatism describes a system of interest representation that is of particular concern for understanding many European welfare states. Briefly stated, in a neocorporatist system CSOs are not only service providers, but they actively take part in shaping the policies that regulate those same services. Neocorporatism is distinguished from earlier anti-democratic corporatist systems (Bevir, 2007). In neocorporatist settings, CSOs are organised in representative peak organisations that, through various institutionalised channels, seek negotiated agreements with governments (Lijphart, 2012; Schmitter, 1974). In a strict sense, neocorporatism refers to a system of interest representation dealing with economic issues and the labour market

(Lijphart, 2012; Siaroff, 1999). However, the term has also been used to describe similar systems covering a wider range of policy areas (education, health, environment, culture, arts, agriculture, ...) (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Öberg et al., 2011). For Salamon and Anheier (1997), corporatist regimes are characterised by the preservation of social consensus through the inclusion of (parts of) civil society in the state structure, whereby large public-sector spending is combined with a large nonprofit sector.

A key characteristic of neocorporatism is that it secures a “mutual stabilization of exchanges” between government and other social spheres (Kjaer, 2016: 134). This model of institutionalised exchange does not fit well with a linear evolution from bureaucracy to NPM and NPG. Both governance theories and the neocorporatist model are expressions of the functional differentiation of society (Esmark, 2009; Luhmann, 1997, 2013) which states that society consists of different function systems and no single function system (e.g., politics, economy, religion) holds the societal centre from which an ultimate source of power emanates over all other systems. Following on from this position, the governance of public services becomes a matter of intermediary institutions (Kjaer, 2016), which connect function systems and through which resources, power, authority and accountability are distributed. Neocorporatism is a model in which peak associations functioned as stable connections to coordinate between government, civil society and the economic system (Kjaer, 2016). While government held an important central position in this arrangement, other social spheres did not lose their functional autonomy.

However, neocorporatism was confronted by the so-called crisis of the welfare state in the 1970s, during which the unfulfilled promise of full employment and endless economic growth became apparent as demographic evolutions put the pension system under pressure, and economic crises disrupted the political balance (Judt, 2006; Kazepov, 2005). A dual movement took place regarding the position of government: it became regarded as the root cause of societal problems (considered to be overly sluggish, dysfunctional and inflexible), while simultaneously being redeployed as an active instrument for the implementation of the new liberal strategies (Dardot & Laval, 2013; Wacquant, 2012). The relationship between government and the rest of society shifted from a focus on collective mechanisms of solidarity and welfare to regulation by competition and contracting (Kazepov, 2005; Kjaer, 2016). Thus, even though NPM attacked government for its flaws, it is itself mostly a top-down strategy (Fattore et al., 2012). Others have argued that this crisis enhanced the functional differentiation of society, making it necessary to place government in horizontal and flexible networks. Davies and Spicer (2015) argue that underlying the network paradigm is the assumption that networks are well suited for these sociological conditions: “Networks are

purported to be beneficial because they provide a better 'fit' with macro environmental changes such as globalization, the restructuring of the state, individualization, and knowledge capitalism" (2015: 223). Yet, critics have pointed out that many of these networks can be considered especially suited for the further advancement of the aforementioned competitive liberal strategies (Davies, 2011a, 2011b; Swyngedouw, 2005).

Some authors have empirically argued that neocorporatist institutions have been destabilised especially by NPM-style reforms. Based on his research in Germany and France, Bode states that "the logics of competition and rivalry, entrance and exit, bargaining and instrumental behavior" are fuelling a "creeping marketization" of welfare state partnerships (Bode, 2011: 116). Other research in Germany, Italy and the UK, found a "transnational movement towards quasi-marketization and managerialization" (Klenk & Pavolini, 2015: 253). Bode, Klenk and Pavolini also highlight that differences between countries and sectors remain important (Bode & Brandsen, 2014; Klenk & Pavolini, 2015): even though similar techniques are used across sectors and countries, their application and use have to be considered in light of institutional, political and cultural contexts. As stated elsewhere, "There is no global model (...), and there is no distinct, homogeneous continental European model either" (Pollitt et al., 2007: 198). Comparative research by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) has shown that in countries with a strong neocorporatist tradition, NPM-style reforms have had a more moderate impact, which could point to the important role of the close interaction between government and civil society in buffering the impact of NPM reforms.

Furthermore, several authors have argued that institutional reforms in this regard almost always include some form of 'institutional layering' as new elements are gradually added on top of or alongside existing institutions without dismantling them (Koreh et al., 2019; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). Lowndes (2001) emphasises that governance should be considered a mix of different steering principles (hierarchies, markets and networks), as does Osborne (2006) in his overview of ideal-typical governance models. Importantly, this institutional layering is taking place in a situation of increasingly permeable boundaries between civil society, markets and governments. In this context, hybridity is not only the permanent state of CSOs but also of the governance arrangement as a whole (Brandsen et al., 2005; Hustinx et al., 2014). However, institutional layering is not a neutral evolution: as new institutional elements are introduced, support for the original institutions tapers off and internal coherence can be reduced (Koreh et al., 2019). For sure, the impact of marketisation and NPM-style reforms can have a considerable impact on the social functions of CSOs in the form of mission drift away from community building, preferring service delivery over advocacy, or increased managerialism (Maier et al., 2016; Suykens et al., 2018). Of

particular consequence is the development of more entrepreneurial orientations (Bode & Brandsen, 2014) of CSOs at the expense of their community or advocacy roles.

The question of whether incremental reforms are adding up to a gradual but fundamental institutional change is a difficult one but stands at the core of the discussion. This is why Bode speaks of a creeping marketisation (Bode, 2011), where he concludes that changes in both Germany and France resulted in “a hybrid mix of quasi-market governance and agreement-based regulation” (2011: 135). Streeck and Thelen (2005) refer to other research (e.g., in France and Germany) in which gradual incremental changes in the fringe accumulated to a transformative shift towards further liberalisation of the broader welfare system. This institutional layering can thus have significant consequences (Koreh et al., 2019; Streeck & Thelen, 2005). Empirical analysis of neocorporatist institutions can offer more insight to this debate by establishing to what extent NPM-style institutional elements operate alongside neocorporatist institutions. Accordingly, this chapter examines such institutional arrangements in a typical neocorporatist context (Belgium) where some recent reforms in different parts of civil society could indicate the layering of the neocorporatist institutions. Below, we will discuss this context briefly, before we continue with our research methodology and findings.

3.1.2 The Belgian-Flemish case

Belgium matches all the criteria of a neocorporatist regime, with high degrees of formalised exchange between government and CSOs (Bloodgood, Tremblay-Boire, & Prakash, 2014; Jahn, 2016). A clear illustration of this is the presence of the strategic advisory boards in which the Flemish government engages with representative umbrella organisations concerning a wide range of policy issues (economic, social, cultural, environmental, ...). Belgium also has one of the largest nonprofit sectors globally (Salamon & Sokolowski, 1999), with 12.3% of the total workforce active in nonprofits (in 2014) (Rigo et al., 2018). In turn, the nonprofit sector in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium, has the highest proportion of paid nonprofit professionals in Belgium (59.5% of all paid nonprofit professionals in Belgium work for a Flemish nonprofit) (Rigo et al., 2018).

In Belgium, this neocorporatist structure has historically intersected with a strong consociational legacy, the so-called pillarisation (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Van Den Bulck, 1992; Wayenberg et al., 2010): tight coupling between CSOs, political parties and government representatives that is constructed around shared values or interests (Billiet, 2004; Witte et al., 2009). Although pillarisation reached its peak in the 1960s, some argue that networks between political parties and CSOs can still be of significant impact on public policymaking

(Huysse, 2003; van Haute et al., 2013), especially in domains such as health, social security and labour market (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016).

Starting in the 1960s, new social movements (Hellemans, 1990) organised themselves around social issues that in their view were being ignored by the traditional pillarised CSOs: women's rights, environmental concerns, pacifist causes and international solidarity (Develtere, 2004; Hooghe, 2004; Stouthuysen, 2004). Many of these new movements evolved into successful organisations and developed umbrella organisations outside of the pillarised structures, with some considerable impact on the political and social agenda (Hooghe, 2004) and themselves becoming part of the institutionalised consultation system. In the 1990s, as society became further depillarised (with citizens no longer living their lives under the cloak of the pillars), the political position of pillarised CSOs was increasingly contested (Huysse, 2003). Instead, the role of CSOs in generating social capital became increasingly valued, especially with the rise of extreme-right politics in the early 1990s. As one researcher put it, the societal discourse concerning the role of CSOs at the end of the 1990s seemed to shift from reprehensible pillars (i.e., political) to praised civil society (i.e., community, social capital) (Billiet, 2004).

Meanwhile, the Flemish Region developed its own substantial powers with the further federalisation of the Belgian state. Importantly, the Flemish Region has mostly copied the same corporatist traditions from the federal level (Wayenberg et al., 2010), although NPM-style reforms were introduced by both the federal and Flemish governments at the start of the 2000s. These reforms fit a broader continental European approach as modernisers, in which administrative reform is built on the core elements of the traditional system with modernising elements, such as an increased focus on performance and results (instead of adherence to bureaucratic rules) and more citizen-oriented design of services (citizens as customers of public services) (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Recent policy reforms have introduced new market-type mechanisms in the governance of several nonprofit sectors, mainly stimulation through increased competition, pressure to gain more market-based income and the introduction of more market-type management techniques. In the domain of health and wellbeing, cash-for-care systems have been introduced which entail a shift from clients to consumers along with increased competition between service providers (nonprofit, social profit and for-profit organisations). In the social economy (i.c. Work Integration Social Enterprises, or WISEs), recent regulatory reform has introduced a unification of the sector, the centralisation of administrative monitoring and steering mechanisms through the central governmental labour agency, and is expected to push towards a more market-oriented reintegration of WISEs' target employees. In the

sociocultural domain, concerns have arisen over the affirmation by Flemish policymakers that CSOs need to become less reliant on public funding, which resulted in an official white paper on alternative (read: nonpublic) sources for funding (Gatz, 2017).

The above illustrates how Belgium (Flanders) constitutes a salient context for the study of neocorporatist institutions. It illustrates the complexity and diversity of its civil society, as well as how the position of CSOs has evolved over the years to what some argue is a less political and more service- or community-oriented focus (Billiet, 2004). We provided three illustrations which show how different NPM-style reforms are currently undertaken across a diverse set of organisations. In the following section, we present how our study examines these three sectors in depth and present their main characteristics.

3.2 Methodology

We focused on organisations working at the Flemish regional level—CSOs that aim to provide services beyond the local community, organise political work at the level of the Flemish Region or take up the role of umbrella organisation for the Flemish Region. Specifically, we collected data from CSOs in three domains in civil society: health-and-wellbeing organisations, social-cultural organisations and social economy enterprises. ‘Wellbeing’ includes organisations and associations active in providing care for specific target groups (youth, people with disabilities, people in poverty) as well as general wellbeing services for those dealing with personal, relational or social issues. The social economy consists of WISEs⁶, which include sheltered workshops (for people with mental and physical disabilities) and social workshops (for people with various psychological or social disadvantages). The sociocultural sector consists of a more diverse range of organisations striving for certain kinds of social change: social rights movements, ethnic-cultural associations, professional associations, patient and disability organisations, political organisations, sociocultural organisations, youth work organisations and faith-based organisations.

Data were collected in three consecutive phases. Firstly, since there is no single database that collects from all organisations across these different sectors, we analysed different public databases (COBHRA, SISCA, Crossroads Bank for Enterprises, Social Map, NACE-BEL),

⁶ In Flanders, the term ‘social economy’ is predominantly associated with WISE (Defourny & Nyssens, 2008). The term ‘social enterprise’ is also closely associated with WISE. As for instance argued by Kerlin (2006), in Belgium, the term ‘social enterprise’ refers, in the first place, to “service organizations that are developing commercial activities” and, in the second place, to WISE: “This second definition stems from the specific social service needs around which social enterprises have developed in Europe causing them to be associated with employment creating initiatives” (Kerlin, 2006: 250).

lists provided by the Flemish government and lists produced by different network- and umbrella organisations (social economy, environmental organisations, North-South movement, women's organisations, self-help associations, faith-based organisations, etc.). In order to ensure a homogeneous data collection, the research team frequently discussed how to categorise organisations. To ensure that each organisation in the database was still active, a web search was done to see if these organisations had some form of online presence (dedicated website, social media account, or up-to-date contact details). This resulted in a collection of 2475 organisations.

Secondly, following the distribution of the database population, a representative sample was extracted. In order to achieve a sufficiently representative sample with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a minimum set of ca. 350 organisations was needed. Taking into account the wide variety of organisations, our goal was to reach a net response of 500 organisations. In total, 747 CSOs were contacted of which 496 organisations participated. We provide more details on the distribution of the sample and populations in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

Third, a survey was sent out in two phases, and in each phase, the highest-placed managers of the CSO were the respondents. In the first phase, a trained professional conducted face-to-face interviews; in the second phase, additional questions were presented using an online web tool or postal survey (respondents could also opt for another face-to-face interview). The survey questions were pre-tested, used expert respondents, offered incentives for participation⁷ and used labelled response options (Lee, Benoit-Bryan, & Johnson, 2012). Invitation letters were sent out at the end of September 2017, and the final surveys were completed in May 2018. The first phase resulted in 496 interviews, which is a response rate of 66.39%. The second phase had a lower response rate of 53.95% (403 participants). In order to check whether the respondents reflected the composition of our sample framework, we used the chi-square test. The results indicated that there was no significant difference between the distribution of the sample framework and the final respondents.

Lastly, because of the complex Belgian state structure, the survey asked respondents to indicate which government was the most important for their organisation. For this article, we selected those organisations that indicated the Flemish government as most important (thus excluding 157 CSOs that selected the local, provincial, federal or European government). This

⁷ We offered a report in which the responses of the organisation were compared to the mean scores of their respective sector or domain.

means that our final sample included 339 CSOs (277 in the second survey phase). Details are reported in the appendix of this chapter.

3.3 Measures

We have constructed several variables that measured how managers of CSOs evaluated some of the key components of the neocorporatist relationship between CSOs and government that we described above. Firstly, we measured how managers perceive the functions of CSOs in the state system, focusing specifically on their role in the policy process. Secondly, managers reported how they assess the extent of governmental monitoring as well as governmental control over strategic organisational decisions. Thirdly, we measured managers' estimation of the proportion of different income sources (market, government, community), the occurrence of competitive public funding, and the competitive struggle for clients (or members) and organisational resources. Finally, we added several measures to assess whether some form of shared or negotiated decision-making was present: to what extent do managers believe that government is a substantive partner (or not), that governmental monitoring leaves room for consultation and that certain strategic organisational decisions are made in consultation with the government?

3.3.1 Functions of CSOs

We focused on four specific functions of CSOs: service delivery, advocacy (policy influence), political work (striving for social change) and social capital (providing a sense of belonging). The functions that CSOs fulfil can change over time and can become part of public debate, as we have illustrated earlier with the increased attention for social capital in Flanders. One can also argue that the creation of social capital is usually fundamental to the other functions of CSOs (service delivery, policy work and political work), as it helps to build trust and solidarity between its members (Edwards, 2014) and will thus always be present. In the neocorporatist system, the functions of service delivery and advocacy would also be an important part of the self-identification of the CSOs.

We measured these different functions by four items, each on a five-point Likert scale. The question was: 'To what extent does your organisation fulfil the following roles?', presenting several responses: 'Giving people a sense of belonging' (social capital), 'providing a service or product that fulfils a specific societal need' (service delivery) or '(trying to) influence policymakers' (advocacy). The political function was a separate question in the survey,

measured on an 11-point scale, asking 'to what extent does your organisation strive, or argue, for specific social or political change?'

The advocacy role of CSOs deserves special attention since it is considered a crucial element of neocorporatists systems. In order to influence policy and policymakers, CSOs can combine different strategies: gaining direct access to policymakers (politicians and administrators), building external pressure through political work or through forming coalitions in umbrella organisations (Heylen, Fraussen, & Beyers, 2018; Verschuere & De Corte, 2013). We measured each of these strategies using a five-point scale. In neocorporatist systems, the role of umbrella organisations (or peak associations) is especially important: it is through the representative function of umbrella organisations that institutionalised participation in the policy process is regulated (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016; Lijphart, 2012). Umbrella organisations help individual CSOs to deal with the high transaction costs and required capacity to organise direct access to policymakers (Beyers & Braun, 2014). In the specific case of Flanders, the Strategic Advisory Councils (here called: formal advisory boards) are of particular importance: they are a central part of the governance arrangement in Flanders and provide CSOs (representative organisations, umbrella organisations) with institutionalised access to the policy process (Fraussen & Beyers, 2016). To include other forms of institutionalised access, we have also included the less regularly organised but still highly formalised participation in various governmental committees or workgroups. In sum, we asked managers to assess in broad terms how often their CSO engaged in each of these five advocacy strategies: personal contact with administrators, personal contact with politicians or cabinets, participation in formal advisory boards, participation in governmental committees and participation in activities of umbrella organisations (responses included: not, only once, several times, often, very often).

3.3.2 Governmental monitoring and partnership

Monitoring by government expresses a top-down mechanism, which can be part of bureaucratic and NPM-style oversight. Even in network-like relationships or partnerships, some form of oversight (e.g., on the correct use of provided finances) can exist. We measured four different types of monitoring that assess a variety of monitoring practices. This was done by asking managers to score the following monitoring activities of the Flemish government: 'monitors your activities', 'monitors whether your finances are in order', 'monitors the performance of your organisation', and 'asks about your social impact'. Again, all items were measured using a five-point scale.

We also measured to what extent this monitoring relationship offered room for consultation. We used an item that expressed that 'during monitoring, there is room for consultation with the government' (again on a five-point scale). Of course, in a neocorporatist setting, there is more to the relationship than mere consultation: government and CSOs can be considered partners in the state system. We, therefore, asked managers to assess whether government 'is a partner with whom your organisation cooperates substantively'.

3.3.3 Financial resources and competitive environment

In neocorporatist partnerships, large public spending goes hand in hand with a large nonprofit sector that is supported by significant public resources. To measure the extent to which CSOs rely on public funding, market income or community contributions, we asked respondents to assess the proportions of each of these three sources of income. We excluded all responses that did not add up to 100 percent, resulting in 256 valid responses. Government subsidies do not exclude market-type steering: the use of project-based or contractual funding can introduce significant levels of competition between CSOs. We, therefore, asked managers whether government funding includes these types of funding, using a binary yes/no item.

Furthermore, we asked whether government was considered a crucial financier (5-point scale). This is important since the subjective assessment of public funding can significantly influence how CSOs position themselves politically vis-à-vis their subsidising government (Arvidson, Johansson, & Scaramuzzino, 2018). A second subjective indicator was measured by asking respondents to assess the evolution of the different sources of income (government, market, community) over the last ten years. We also asked respondents to assess the following statement on a five-point scale: 'Compared to ten years ago, governments today opt more for temporary contractual support than for structural subsidies of your core activities.'

If the claims of a destabilisation of neocorporatist governance patterns are correct, we should also find that CSOs are active in a more competitive environment than before. Because of the variety in context and income sources, we focused on two dimensions of competition: obtaining organisational resources and gaining clients or members. Both were again asked by a subjective assessment on a five-point scale. Furthermore, a binary yes/no item measured whether managers believed the Flemish government stimulates competition for clients.

3.3.4 Strategic organisational decisions

We look at three main areas of decision-making in CSOs that can capture the possible influence of governments: the goals (or mission), their work processes (or methods) and their

desired results (Verschuere & De Corte, 2014). In market-type arrangements, governmental control over the desired results (targets) is of particular concern for governments (Bouckaert, Peters, & Verhoest, 2010). The three dimensions were measured using a five-point scale with two poles (organisational autonomy versus governmental control). The middle of the scale indicated the decisions were made by government and organisation together.

3.4 Findings

We compared the results between sectors, using a series of Kruskal-Wallis tests with post-hoc Mann-Whitney tests (with Bonferroni correction) for pairwise comparisons. We used mean scores (M) for the descriptive overview of the findings and median scores (Mdn) to report the findings of the Kruskal-Wallis test (as these are more correct for this type of rank-sum test). All statistical findings are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of findings for Flemish survey

Kruskal-Wallis test ($p < .05$ *, $p < .01$ **, $p < .001$ ***) with post-hoc Mann-Whitney pairwise comparison (Bonferroni correction)
 r = effect size (small = [0.00–0.30], medium = [0.30–0.50], large = [0.50–1.00])

	Median values			significant? (Kruskal-Wallis test-statistic)	Sector Pairwise Comparison (Mann-Whitney)			
	Socio-cultural	Wellbeing	Social Economy		sociocultural / wellbeing	sociocultural / social economy	social economy / wellbeing	
Functions of CSOs						r (effect size)		
Service delivery	4.00	5.00	5.00	Yes	(40.165 ***)	-0.3606 ***	-0.1823 ***	n.s.
Political function	4.20	3.80	3.20	Yes	(31.879 ***)	-0.2617 ***	-0.3179 ***	n.s.
Advocacy	4.00	4.00	3.00	No	-	-	-	-
Social capital	4.00	5.00	5.00	Yes	(21.532 ***)	-0.1913 **	-0.2779 ***	n.s.
Monitoring and partnership						r (effect size)		
General monitoring	5.00	5.00	5.00	Yes	(15.292 ***)	-0.2163 **	n.s.	-0.2110 *
Use of finances	5.00	5.00	5.00	Yes	(7.110 *)	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Performance	5.00	5.00	4.00	Yes	(11.276 **)	-0.1581 *	n.s.	-0.2295 *
In consultation	4.00	4.00	4.00	No	-	-	-	-
Demands impact	4.00	4.00	4.00	No	-	-	-	-
Govt. as partner	3.00	4.00	3.00	No	-	-	-	-
Sources of income						r (effect size)		
Public income	60.00%	95.00%	41.90%	Yes	(70.340 ***)	-0.5065 ***	n.s.	-0.4833 ***
Market income	10.00%	0.60%	55.00%	Yes	(51.829 ***)	-0.3208 ***	-0.3598 ***	-0.5435 ***
Community income	10.00%	2.00%	0.00%	Yes	(38.630 ***)	-0.2392 **	-0.4128 ***	-0.4437 ***
Govt. is crucial financier	5.00	5.00	5.00	Yes	(30.873 ***)	-0.2929 ***	-0.2099 **	n.s.

(continues on next page)

(Table 3 – *continued*)

	Median values			significant? (Kruskal-Wallis test-statistic)	Sector Pairwise Comparison (Mann-Whitney)			
	Socio-cultural	Well-being	Social Economy		sociocultural / wellbeing	sociocultural / social economy	social economy / wellbeing	
Evolution of income (10 years)					r (effect size)			
Public income	3.00	3.00	2.00	Yes	(17.804 ***)	n.s.	-0.3255 ***	-0.3555 ***
Market income	3.00	3.00	4.00	Yes	(20.434 ***)	n.s.	-0.33447 ***	-0.4384 ***
Community income	3.00	3.00	3.00	No	-	-	-	-
Competition					r (effect size)			
Resources (CSOs)	3.00	3.00	3.00	Yes	(7.054 *)	-0.01380 *	n.s.	n.s.
Resources (Corp.)	1.00	1.00	2.00	Yes	(42.939 ***)	n.s.	-0.3450 **	-0.4962 ***
Clients (CSOs)	2.00	2.00	2.00	No	-	-	-	-
Clients (Corp.)	1.00	1.00	2.00	Yes	(45.102 ***)	n.s.	-0.3569 ***	-0.5038 ***
Govt. stimulates client competition (0/1)	0.00	0.00	0.00	Yes	(14.672 **)	-0.2365 **	n.s.	n.s.
Advocacy strategies					r (effect size)			
Contacts with administrators	3.00	3.00	3.00	No	-	-	-	-
Contacts with politicians	3.00	2.00	2.00	Yes	(11.736 **)	n.s.	-.2230 **	n.s.
Advisory boards	3.00	3.00	1.00	Yes	(24.178 ***)	n.s.	-0.3317 ***	-0.3286 ***
Committees	3.00	2.00	2.00	Yes	(8.491 *)	n.s.	-0.1778 *	n.s.
Umbrella orgs.	4.00	4.00	5.00	Yes	(6.501 *)	n.s.	-0.1702 *	n.s.
Control over strategic decision-making					r (effect size)			
Goals	5.00	4.00	4.00	Yes	(35.777 ***)	-0.3456 ***	n.s.	n.s.
Methods	5.00	4.00	4.00	Yes	(16.175 ***)	-0.1932 **	-0.2232 **	n.s.
Results	4.00	3.00	4.00	Yes	(16.122 ***)	-0.2294 ***	n.s.	n.s.

3.4.1 Functions of CSOs

Whereas managers of CSOs in wellbeing and social economy on average report a primary concern for service delivery and social capital, CSOs in the sociocultural sector are reportedly more balanced concerning these different functions. Overall, the highest mean scores are found for service delivery (M=4.19) and social capital (M=4.28), followed by the political role (M=3.57) and advocacy (M=3.49). However, this view can be very different depending on the sector, as can be seen in Table 4. In wellbeing and the social economy, managers are clearly more concerned with the function of social capital and service delivery. In the sociocultural sector, there is a smaller distance between the different functions: social capital is followed closely by the political function and service delivery, and a bit further down by advocacy. The political function scores especially low in the social economy.

Table 4: Functions of CSOs (mean scores, scale 1–5)

Functions	Sociocultural	Wellbeing	Social Economy
Social capital	4.02	4.45	4.78
Service delivery	3.82	4.60	4.33
Political function	3.91	3.35	2.92
Advocacy	3.56	3.43	3.45

We found that advocacy is not statistically different between these three sectors. For the other three functions we found that CSOs in the sociocultural sector scored significantly lower on the functions service delivery and social capital, although in general, the scores on these are still high. In terms of striving for social or political change, the sociocultural sectors score significantly higher than wellbeing and the social economy.

Considering the different advocacy strategies, we found that managers across the three sectors seem to prefer the strategy of networking through umbrella organisations to other institutionalised advocacy strategies (direct personal contact, advisory boards, committees). On average, participating in umbrella organisations is reported to occur frequently (M=3.85, Mdn=4.00), and managers in the social economy report higher participation in umbrella organisations than those in the sociocultural sector (although the effect is small) but lower participation in formal advisory boards compared to the other sectors. There is also a significant difference concerning the participation in governmental commissions, although this is mostly due to the difference between the sociocultural sector (higher) and the social economy (lower). Personal contacts with administrators also seem to occur frequently across

all the sectors (M=3.38). Direct access to politicians is lower than access to administrators and is especially lower for the sectors of wellbeing and social economy, compared to the sociocultural sector (small but significant effect).

3.4.2 Governmental monitoring and partnership

The four different types of monitoring (monitoring of general activities, use of finances, performance and impact) all received high mean scores across the sectors. Some statistical differences between the sectors could be found concerning the general monitoring of activities and performance monitoring, but the effects were all rather small. These differences were due to the statistically higher score reported by managers in wellbeing on the monitoring of activities and performance, compared to the managers in other sectors. The scores for monitoring the use of finances were also statistically different, although no pairwise statistical differences were found. We also measured whether managers indicate to engage in consultation with government concerning this monitoring, and the overall response was slightly positive. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between the sectors, which implies that this practice is a part of the administrative relationships across sectors. We also found that managers believe that the Flemish government is interested in some measurement of impact, and again, this seems to be the same across all sectors as no statistical difference was found.

Concerning whether managers see government as a partner, we found a low positive average score across all sectors (M=3.23). Even though we found that in the social economy a lower proportion of CSOs agrees with this statement, there are no significant differences between the sectors.

3.4.3 Financial resources and competitive environment

In general, managers estimate that public funding is the most important source of income (M=66.17% of the total income of all CSOs), followed by market income (M=18.75%) and community-based income (M=15.08%). However, the three sectors have distinctly different financial structures. Based on the respondents' estimates, CSOs in the wellbeing sector are statistically more dependent on government income (M=84.81%, Mdn=95.00%) compared to the other two sectors (where the proportion of government income is about half of the total income). Market income is significantly different for all sectors. It is reported to have only a marginal role in the wellbeing sector (M=7.41%, Mdn=0.60%), a slightly bigger role in the sociocultural sector (M=21.96%, Mdn=10.00%), and, as can be expected, a more important role in the social economy (M=49.62%, Mdn=55.00%). Community income is estimated to play

the biggest role in the sociocultural sector (M=23.20%, Mdn=10.00%), a small role in the wellbeing sector (M=7.78%, Mdn=2.00%) and almost no role in the social economy (M=4.20%, Mdn=0.00%).

When asked for a subjective assessment of how this income structure has evolved over the last ten years, managers generally believe that things have remained somewhat stable (overall mean scores fluctuate around a value of '3 – remained the same', with an SD lower than 1). When we compare this across sectors, we find that the managers in the social economy more than those in other sectors believe that the share of public income has dropped somewhat, and the share of market income has risen.

The above shows that overall, the income provided by the government takes up a large proportion of the total income for all these organisations and that managers generally believe that this proportion has remained somewhat stable over the last ten years (except in the social economy). Yet, many variations exist in how governments fund CSOs. Our findings pertaining to three different types of public funding can be found in Table 5. The managers of nearly every CSO indicate receiving subsidies for their core activities. NPM-style public funding also occurs in all sectors. Project-based funding is reported by over half of managers in the social economy and the sociocultural sectors and to a somewhat lesser extent in the wellbeing sector (a small statistical difference). Contracts (to provide services or products) are also frequently reported on average by just over one in five managers in the sociocultural and social economy sectors and 14.00% in the wellbeing sector (with no statistical difference between the sectors). We also found that the statement of increased contract-based funding at the expense of structural subsidies is slightly affirmed (M=2.26) and is shared by managers across the different sectors (no statistical difference was found).

Table 5: Types of public funding (% of organisations)

<i>Percentage of organisations that have this type of income (yes/no question)</i> <i>Chi-square with Cramer's V test (p<.05 *, p<.01 **, p<.001 ***)</i>				
Types	Sociocultural	Wellbeing	Social Economy	<i>Cramer's V</i>
Subsidies for core activities	94.40%	98.10%	100.00%	<i>n.s.</i>
Subsidies for one-time projects	53.90%	37.20%	58.30%	0.176 *
Contracts (services, products)	21.40%	14.00%	22.70%	<i>n.s.</i>

Furthermore, across all sectors, the Flemish government is perceived to be a crucial financier, with an overall high mean score (M=4.54) and with the managers in the social economy (M=4.90) and wellbeing (M=4.87) being particularly outspoken. Our statistical test shows that

even in this overall high score, the sociocultural sector differs significantly from the other sectors, but the effects are rather small. The overall appreciation of government as a crucial financier is positively correlated with the received percentage of public income (Spearman $r=0.459$, $p<.01$) and negatively correlated with community (-0.218 , $p<.01$) and market income (-0.135 , $p<.05$).

3.4.4 Competition

Respondents indicate that they experience rather little competition for organisational resources or clients (or members) from other CSOs and almost none from corporations. Generally speaking, competition with other CSOs for resources is considered reasonable (three on a scale of five). In the social economy, competition is experienced somewhat more than in other sectors (the difference with wellbeing generates a rather strong statistical effect), although, on average, competition is still not considered strong. Here, the strongest statistical difference is found concerning both types of competition with corporations, although it concerns the difference between no competition (sociocultural, wellbeing) and weak competition (social economy). Managers also indicate that the Flemish government is generally not a strong driver of competition for members (or clients).

3.4.5 Strategic decision-making

CSOs across the sectors indicate on average a high level of autonomy concerning their organisation's strategic decisions, although, for goals ($M=4.13$, $Mdn=5.00$) and methods ($M=4.34$, $Mdn=5.00$), this is somewhat higher than for results ($M=3.65$, $Mdn=4.00$). There are statistically significant differences between the three sectors, which are mostly due to higher scores of organisational autonomy for the CSOs in the sociocultural sector in comparison to the wellbeing sector (although the effects are small). We also looked at the extent of shared decision-making and interestingly, found that this is the highest when it comes to the desired results: more than one in three CSOs see this as a shared process (37.10%). In the case of goal setting, about 1/5 of CSOs (21.7%) report sharing the decisions with the government, and for work methods, this is ca. 1/10 (10.9%).

3.5 Discussion

This chapter set out to assess key characteristics of the governance arrangement in Flanders, addressing the issue of whether its typically neocorporatist governance patterns can still be observed. It provides an empirical test that contributes to the wider discussion on the changing nature of governance in neocorporatist welfare states. Our empirical contribution is built first and foremost on establishing a database for analysis that captures a wide variety of CSOs from different sectors (sociocultural, health and wellbeing, social economy). Secondly, we conducted an extensive representative survey of CSOs, providing a rich set of quantitative data. Importantly, all data in our survey are self-reported and originate from one source (i.e., the leading managers of CSOs). Thus, we do not include the perspective of other important members of CSOs (board members, other professionals, volunteers). Because our data are self-reported, we must also be careful not to treat these findings as objective measurements. Indeed, while these perceptions provide useful insights into a large section of civil society, they cannot express what is going on *in practice*. Moreover, our survey data consist of perceptions on the *current* state of affairs (and some subjective reflections on historical evolutions) and is therefore not suited for assessing claims on ongoing trends or evolutionary dynamics. Also, while we provide an explorative overview of a wide range of organisations, we do not identify any causal mechanisms. However, based on our explorative cross-sectoral comparison, the current state of the governance, relations can be considered as the (preliminary) outcome of the processes identified in the theory review. Using our data, we can assess whether some of the claims made concerning the creeping marketisation of neocorporatist welfare states can be observed.

First, our data suggest that CSOs should not be considered primarily as service providers. While service provision is generally seen as very important, the most important function the managers in our survey see in their CSOs is providing a sense of belonging to people (social capital). Interestingly, social capital scored significantly higher in the social economy and wellbeing, the sectors that also scored high on service delivery. A possible explanation might be the historical roots of these sectors in community-based social initiatives. This does not mean that social capital and service delivery were not important for the sociocultural sector. However, here we found a more balanced combination of different functions. Most likely, this has to do with the more diverse composition of this sector compared to the other two sectors (cf. *supra*). In general, we see a civil society that can be described as multipurpose (Bode, 2011): if we are to believe the self-assessment of the managers, most CSOs combine at least two roles to a higher degree (service delivery and social capital), coupled with a third role that is still relatively highly regarded (either advocacy or a political role). What is not clear from our

results is to what extent these different roles are actually fulfilled in practice, especially given the self-reported nature of our data.

Second, as expected in neocorporatist settings, government is reported to be a crucial financier by almost every respondent, but we do find three very different financial structures between these sectors. Given the position of the respondents (leading managers) in the organisations, we consider their estimates of these percentages as adequate variables for measuring their 'objective' income streams. The wellbeing sector is still mostly dependent on public funding, the social economy on a combination of public funding and market income, and the sociocultural sector combines a large degree of public funding with significant market- and community-based income. Moreover, only in the social economy (WISE) do respondents report to have experienced a decline in public funding and a rise in market-based income. WISE might be an exception because of their more pronounced hybrid status as social enterprises. Higher engagement in commercial market activities could indeed explain this reported increase in market-based income. In the other sectors, on average, the proportion of the different income sources are considered to have remained stable. We hypothesise that this might be due to the rigid neocorporatist framework in which public services provided by CSOs cannot easily be replaced or repealed. Another explanation might be a case of institutional conversion in which the nature of public funding has changed towards more competitive types of funding. We discuss this further below. However, these findings on the evolution of income sources should be considered carefully: it relies on a subjective recollection from the respondents and is thus susceptible to hindsight bias.

Third, we have found little evidence of market-type governance, with the strongest indicator being NPM-style public funding: managers estimate that both project- and contract-based public funding are frequently used, although to a somewhat lesser extent in the wellbeing sector. Respondents have also indicated they have experienced a rise in project-based funding at the expense of structural subsidies (again, with the same methodological caveat of hindsight bias). Yet, these results do not reflect the competitive nature of these types of funding *in practice*: maybe some percentage of these public funding strategies are embedded in a broader preferred partnership, whereby projects and contracts are tailored to the mutual needs of CSOs and government. We have also found no evidence of a highly competitive environment for Flemish CSOs, as managers report only low to moderate levels of competition for resources and members or clients.

Fourth, managers experience government in different roles, with a combination of hierarchical oversight and negotiated partnership. Hierarchy is most clearly expressed by the high

importance given by managers to the procedural and performance monitoring by government in every sector, whereby managers in the wellbeing sector report the highest scores. An important limitation to this finding is the narrowly defined indicator for performance monitoring (single-item question: “This government monitors the performance of your organisation”). Looking at organisational strategic decision-making, more than one in three managers reports sharing of decision-making power with government when it comes to determining the results to be achieved by the CSO. This percentage drops significantly lower for goal setting and decisions on work methods—both in favour of higher organisational autonomy. Of course, one should be careful to take these responses at face value: since these questions concern the autonomy of the CSOs, this could lead to some degree of socially desirable answering strategies (Verschuere & De Corte 2013). As such, a part of this shared decision-making might actually be hiding a higher percentage of governmental control. One could assume that managers prefer to see the desired results of their CSO as a power-sharing process rather than of (implicit or soft) coercion by government. However, if these responses instead reflect a genuine sharing of decision-making, they might point to a close intertwinement of CSOs and governments on some key organisational decisions. The higher focus on results could reflect a more NPM-style interest in the performance of the organisations.

Fifth, as expected, we found that for most CSOs, participating in umbrella organisations is the most important advocacy strategy. This might reflect the institutional rigidity of neocorporatist policy participation. Yet, again, we cannot speak of the resulting outcomes of these advocacy strategies. These might occur in an increasingly adversarial relationship whereby government only formally includes CSOs in the policy process but does not take their input into account.

3.6 Conclusion: change from the margins?

Our study adds to the literature on the relationship between government and CSOs and shows that the neocorporatist institutions on which it is built have not been replaced by NPM-style institutions. Indeed, we find that NPM-style reforms occur mostly in the functioning of public funding: while public funding is for the most part considered stable by our respondents, they do report frequent use of competitive public funding. We argue that this form of institutional layering is important but can be considered marginal in the broader institutional framework. This does not mean that these elements are trivial but only that the old rules (in this case the neocorporatist institutions) are still at work while new elements are introduced (in this case NPM-style public funding) (Streeck & Thelen, 2005). As argued by Mahoney and Thelen (2010), the reason that such layering occurs instead of a displacement of the old rules by new

institutions is because of the political position of the actors involved and little room for a reinterpretation of existing institutions. Indeed, while CSOs report high levels of governmental monitoring, our study shows a relationship between government and CSOs in which administrative and political negotiation is still important. Moreover, our study does not find high levels of competition. This suggests that the changes we are seeing are indeed in the fringe of the neocorporatist institutions, where negotiation-based agreements form the core of the institutional framework and market-type elements are marginal while not trivial. Theoretically, it can be argued that this mix of old and new could lead to lower institutional coherence, which in turn might undermine the neocorporatist institutions (Koreh et al., 2019).

To understand the effects of these changes on CSOs, our study also underlines the importance of contextualising the discussion on the impact of NPM-style reforms, not only *between* countries or regions but also *between* different sectors *within* countries or regions. Within the boundaries of what seems to be a rather stable configuration of neocorporatist relations, each of these sectors has its particular kind of hybridity. These different contexts matter to understand the impact of current or future market-type reforms. For WISE, a rise in relative and absolute terms of market-based income can enhance the entrepreneurial autonomy of many of these organisations—spurring further innovation, but possibly at the expense of its socially oriented goals. In the wellbeing sector, CSOs have a more limited experience with market-type actions, which could result in a less autonomous position as their source of income is less diverse. In this sector, the marketisation of CSOs seems to appear mostly through the introduction of customer-oriented principles (e.g., cash-for-care systems) or competitive public funding. Sociocultural organisations report a considerable proportion of private income (market and community), yet, because of the wide diversity of the sector, it might prove difficult to develop strategies for an even lower dependence on public funding. While highly professionalised CSOs might be able to renew themselves, voluntary associations might possibly face an uphill battle.

For now, our research does not suggest a strong destabilisation of the neocorporatist institutions. A challenge for further research is to identify whether the neocorporatist structures that we have identified do also provide an institutional space in which CSOs can *effectively* contribute to policymaking and politics, and how CSOs from different sectors experience marketisation tendencies *in practice*. While quantitative research provides much-needed context, more in-depth qualitative research or mixed methods can focus on the practices that *actually* matter. Furthermore, future research should also ask what the impact is of the changing political landscape on neocorporatist institutions, as political parties with no historical ties to CSOs become key actors in European governments.

3.7 Appendix to chapter 3

Table 6: Population and sample overview

Domains	Population Database		Response Wave 1		Response Wave 2**		Sampling goal
	N	%	n	%	n	%	
A. Social Economy (WISE)	159	6.42%	49	9.88%	34	6.85%	10%
B. Wellbeing	603	24.36%	158	31.85%	130	26.21%	30%
C. Socio-cultural Organizations	1713	69.21%	289	58.27%	239	48.19%	60%
TOTAL	2475	100%	496	100%	403	81.25%	

** percentages of wave 2 are calculated against the initial total response of wave 1 to illustrate the lower response

Our sample is a good representation of the distribution between the three sampled sectors. In order to account for the organizational diversity within these sectors – a key characteristic of the nonprofit sphere in general (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016) – we over- (e.g., ethnic-cultural associations) and under-sampled (e.g., professional associations) some organizational segments in the sociocultural sector.

Table 7: Organizations that indicated the Flemish Government as their most important government

Domains	Response Wave 1		Flemish Govt. Wave 1		Survey Wave 2**		Flemish Govt. Wave 2	
	n	%			n	%	n	%
A. Social Economy (WISE)	49	9.88%	40	11.80%	34	6.85%	27	9.75%
B. Wellbeing	158	31.85%	134	39.53%	130	26.21%	111	40.07%
C. Social & Cultural Organizations	289	58.27%	165	48.67%	239	48.19%	139	50.18%
	496	100.00%	339	100.00%	403	81.25%	277	100.00%

** percentages of wave 2 are calculated against the initial total response of wave 1 to illustrate the lower response

4 A (self-)imposed road to the market?

Examining the response strategies of WISEs in a neocorporatist governance arrangement

4.1 Introduction⁸

In the previous chapter, we concluded that in Flanders, NPM-style reforms occur mostly in the form of public funding: government is still a crucial financier for civil society organisations, yet CSOs' managers also report that competitive forms of public funding are frequently used. On the whole, it seems that only some moderate NPM-style reforms operate along with the more traditional neocorporatist institutions. We argued that this form of institutional layering can be considered marginal in the broader institutional framework: we identified NPM elements in the fringe of the neocorporatist institutions, where negotiation-based agreements form the core of the institutional framework and market-type elements are marginal (while not trivial).

In this chapter, we look deeper into how NPM-style reforms work in the Flemish context. We build on the conclusions from the previous chapter by looking at one of the three sectors that we have researched: the social economy; in particular, WISEs. WISEs are CSOs in the social economy that engage in market activities in order to provide labour for disadvantaged workers. The reason for selecting WISEs is twofold. First, new legislation has been introduced that reformed this sector, and there has been some discussion in the sector on whether this legislation introduced NPM-style reforms (we will discuss this in more depth in this chapter). Second, WISEs are typical cases of hybrid organisations that operate in a field with fuzzy boundaries between civil society, markets and government and that operate with more market-like internal and external characteristics. Looking at the internal organisational characteristics of CSOs in the Flemish social economy, they show signs of increased business practices (e.g., more commercial income, more use of management tools) when compared to the sociocultural

⁸ A draft of this chapter was presented at EGPA 2018: Pauly, R., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2018). *Steering Civil Society towards the Market? A Mixed-Methods Study of the Governance Arrangement of WISE in Flanders* <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8573613> & TAD 2018: Pauly, R., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2018). *Steering civil society towards the market? An analysis of organisational strategies in the governance arrangement of WISE in Flanders*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8564934>

Corresponding CSI Flanders spotlightpaper: Pauly, R., Suykens, B., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2020). *Tussen Regels en Praktijken in de Sociale Economie. Overheid en Middenveld in Actie*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8659190>

and wellbeing sectors (Suykens, De Rynck, & Verschuere, 2020)⁹. Their market position varies, from regional markets (second-hand stores, landscaping services) to national or even international markets (industrial assembly and packaging). Regarding their relationship with government, WISEs play a dominant role in the social economy and have gradually been institutionalised in the governmental labour market policies, not only in Flanders but wider across Europe (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Overall, we argue that of the three Flemish sectors in our research, WISEs are the most typical case of CSOs where we can expect NPM-style governance.

The question we ask in this chapter is: what organisational strategies are used by WISEs to navigate NPM-style reforms in the Flemish neocorporatist context? In order to answer this question we must look at three issues: one, how can we understand organisational strategies? For this, we will turn to the literature on how CSOs deal with institutional demands in their environment (Oliver, 1991; Pache & Santos, 2010). Two, to analyse the relationship with government, we look at how WISEs have gradually evolved from experimental projects to a unified sector that has become an institutionalised part of the Flemish labour market policies (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). Third, to understand the strategies of WISEs, we will look at the level of the organisations as well as the level of the encompassing policy network. Therefore, this chapter presents a multi-method approach to our research question: we combine survey results with qualitative data (analysis of legislation, semi-structured interviews) to gain a broad insight into this particular sector.

In the following, we first discuss how we will look at organisational strategies, after which we give a brief presentation of WISEs in Flanders (core characteristics, historical institutionalisation). Then we present our methods and main findings.

4.2 Organisational strategies

In the previous two chapters we have discussed the concern that across Europe, the traditions of neocorporatism are becoming increasingly disorganised, specifically through marketisation pressures (Bode, 2006b). We concluded in our previous chapter that we could not confirm this concern for Flanders. Yet, for the sector of the social economy, some of these concerns about

⁹ Their research was part of the same research consortium (CSI Flanders), thus using the same selection of Flemish CSOs across three sectors (sociocultural sector, health and wellbeing, and the social economy). See: Suykens, B., De Rynck, F., & Verschuere, B. (2020). Examining the Extent and Coherence of Nonprofit Hybridization Toward the Market in a Post-corporatist Welfare State. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 1–22.

marketisation and NPM might be more relevant than for other sectors. Suykens et al. (2020) measured international organisational characteristics of Flemish CSOs that can be described as business practices and found that the social economy, more than the other two sectors (wellbeing, sociocultural), has a higher degree of commercialisation and more frequent use of management tools. A particular concern is whether the use of business-like practices can lead to managerialism in CSOs. Managerialism can be understood as the dominance of management practices and ideas' (Meyer, Buber, & Aghamanoukjan, 2013: 173), which can manifest itself at the level of the governance arrangement (a business-like approach to the relationship between CSOs and government) and at the level of the organisation (in the form of business-like practices and discourse). Furthermore, as we have found, the social economy is almost equally dependent on the market as on public income. WISEs are not only providing a public service for a specific target group (providing employment and labour market training for disadvantaged workers), they are also enterprises working in a commercial market. Therefore, WISEs can be considered typical hybrid organisations (Billis, 2010) for whom the boundaries between civil society, markets and governments can be particularly blurry. This means that not only are the organisations themselves characterised as hybrid, but this goes as well for the nature of the relationship between these organisations and the government (Branden et al., 2005; Hustinx et al., 2014). As we have discussed, at the level of governance relationships, this can lead to an institutional mix or institutional layering. Concerning the organisations involved, hybridity means that CSOs have to deal with different institutional demands within complex environments (Oliver, 1991; Pache & Santos, 2010). Part of these complex environments is their relationships with government, as well as market expectations (as is the case for WISEs) or expectations from CSOs' community or organisational network.

When organisations are confronted with external influence, they can choose to comply or not. Oliver (1991) developed an overview of ideal-typical organisational strategies, using institutional and resource dependence theory. These strategies vary in their degree of (non)conformity: acquiescence (compliance), compromise (partial compliance), avoidance (preventing compliance), defiance (rejecting the external demands) and manipulation (influencing the external expectations). Yet, as Pache and Santos (2010) rightfully argue, Oliver does not account for multiple external influences on organisations. When confronted with two competing expectations, how can we still speak of (non)compliance? Indeed, CSOs might choose to ignore one demand while following another. Pache and Santos add two forms of complexity to Oliver's model: the internal differentiation in organisations (different actors inside CSOs can have different expectations) and the differentiation of the environment (different types of external expectations, often competing with each other). Specifically, they argue that conflicting or competing expectations have a higher chance of occurring in

environments that are *highly fragmented* (many different relevant external actors, e.g., governmental actors, commercial clients, civic actors, organisational partners) and have only a *moderate degree of centralisation* (only some external actors have considerable influence over the CSO) (Pache & Santos, 2010). How organisations respond to these competing demands depends on the internal differentiation of the CSO (i.e., is there agreement concerning the organisation's orientation toward the external expectations?) and the nature of the external demands themselves. It particularly matters, Pache and Santos argue, whether the external demands concern *ideological* ("prescribing which goals are legitimate to pursue") or *functional* ("requiring organisations to adopt appropriate means or courses of action") expectations (2010: 459—460). The distinction is important, since organisations are more flexible regarding functional demands, whereas goals are "not easily challenged or negotiable" (2010: 460). Concerning the internal differentiation, Pache and Santos argue that it matters how the members of the organisation regard the external expectations and whether there are different groups among the members with different beliefs on how to act. Using Oliver's response strategies, they present a range of possible scenarios in which these strategies might be used, depending on the nature of the external expectations and the internal differentiation of the CSOs. We present their response model in Table 8 below, which is taken from their article (with some slight rephrasing and with the addition of their definition of the strategies).

This model shows that when organisations have no particular concern regarding the external expectations (absence of internal representation), there is a high possibility of partial compliance (compromise). Yet, when these expectations concern the goals of the organisations, organisations will more likely seek strategies of noncompliance, even in the absence of internal representation. Interestingly, *avoidance* strategies are most likely used in cases where there are no multiple groups with different beliefs inside the organisations, both for expectations concerning means and goals. Avoidance strategies concern such tactics as disguising nonconformity or attempting to "reduce the extent to which [the organisation] is externally inspected, scrutinized, or evaluated by partially detaching or decoupling its technical activities from external contact" (Oliver, 1991: 155). *Defiance* strategies follow a similar context (no multiple groups), although they are more likely in the case of ideological expectations (although they can also act on concerns regarding means). Defiance strategies are "a more active form of resistance" (Oliver, 1991: 156) since they entail a rejection of external expectations. Finally, *manipulation* strategies are highly dependent on being supported by members that are more powerful than others. Manipulation is "the most active" response strategy because it "is intended to actively change or exert power over the content of the expectations themselves or the sources that seek to express or enforce them" (Oliver, 1991:

157). According to Pache and Santos, this strategy depends on the possibility of a “powerful party [with] the ability to impose its views” (2010: 466); for instance, a CSO in which the board of directors chooses to hire new management more attuned to their beliefs. Yet, when it comes to the goals of the organisation, there is a danger that internal conflict paralyses the organisation when no apparent dominant group can control the organisational strategies, and conflicts are left to escalate internally.

Table 8: A model of response to conflicting institutional demands

<i>External expectations</i>	<i>Internal adherence to external expectations</i>	<i>Likelihood of adopting response strategies</i>			
		Compromise	Avoidance	Defiance	Manipulation
Means	Absence	high	high	low	low
	Single	low	high	high	low
	Multiple	high(*)	low	low	high(**)
Goals	Absence	low	high	high	low
	Single	low	high	high	high
	Multiple	low	low	low	high(***)
		<i>(*) balanced power; (**) unbalanced power; (***) The more balanced the power structure, the higher the likelihood of organisational paralysis or breakup.</i>			
Definitions of the strategies:					
Compromise	‘An attempt to achieve partial conformity in order to at least partly accommodate all institutional demands’				
Avoidance	‘An attempt to preclude the necessity to conform to institutional demands’				
Defiance	‘Explicit rejection of at least one of the institutional demands’				
Manipulation	‘Active attempt to alter the content of the institutional demands’				

(table based on Pache & Santos [2010], with some slight rephrasing and with the addition of their definition of the strategies)

4.3 Case study: Work Integration Social Enterprises in Flanders

4.3.1 Work Integration Social Enterprises

In this chapter, we focus on WISEs active at the level of the Flemish Region. In essence, this comprises two similar, yet distinct legal types: sheltered workplaces (SHW) and social

workplaces (SOW), which can be considered the cornerstones of the social economy sector (as we explained in chapter 3, in Flanders the term ‘social economy’ is predominantly associated with WISE). WISEs aim to (re)integrate disadvantaged workers into a job in the normal labour market through a combination of economic productivity, training and coaching. In this dissertation, we will use the term ‘reintegration’ to refer to this process of training and coaching with the explicit goal of gaining employment in the labour market outside of WISEs. In Flanders, however, this reintegration proves to be quite challenging: in the period 2008–2013, only 8% and 5.8% of the disadvantaged workers employed in sheltered and social workplaces obtained a job in the ‘normal’ labour market. (see Table 9). In fact, during this period in social workplaces, more workers became unemployed than moved into the labour market.

Table 9: Movement of employees of SOWs and SHWs in Flanders, 2008–2013

WISE	Remained	‘Normal’ labour market	Unemployment	Retirement	Other (*)	Unknown
SHW	75.8%	8.0%	2.9%	2.6%	4.3%	5.9%
SOW	64.5%	5.8%	9.5%	4.0%	8.6%	5.8%

(*) Other = other forms of benefits or labour market support

Based on Van Waeyenberg, Van Opstal, & De Cuyper (2016)

Sheltered workplaces (SHWs mostly employ individuals with physical or mental disabilities, whereas social workplaces (SOWs focus on individuals that struggle with various psychosocial issues, ranging from poor education and long-term unemployment to addiction issues. WISEs receive their income from the profits from market activities and governmental subsidies. These subsidies consist of wage subsidies and subsidies for providing professional support and coaching. Wage subsidies are meant to compensate for the loss of efficiency of employing disadvantaged workers, and because the number of eligible WISE employees has a maximum limit (determined by the Flemish government), these wage subsidies largely cap the organisational size, as WISEs would have to pay full wages at their own expense if they would decide to recruit additional disadvantaged workers into their workforce.

4.3.2 Gradual institutionalisation of a sector

Apart from different target populations, it is important to note that SHWs and SOWs are active in different types of the market and emerged from different historical backgrounds (see Table 10 below). Emerging in the 1950s–1960s, SHWs started as initiatives that provided care and meaningful activities for those with disabilities, and they soon received governmental

accreditation as human wellbeing service providers (in 1963¹⁰). As part of labour market policy reforms, the regulatory framework for SHWs was later (in 2006) transferred from the wellbeing sector to the social economy sector (Flemish Decree of 2006¹¹). They are mostly active in assembly, packaging, recycling, processing and mailing services across various sectors. SOWs, in turn, were formed in the 1980s through experimentation with alternative forms of employment by CSOs active in the field of social work and human wellbeing and were gradually supported by the labour market policies at the time with the goal of maintaining some form of full employment. After a phase of experimental subsidised projects, a law was introduced in 1998¹² that established SOWs as a distinct domain in the social economy subsidised by the government. In Belgium, the WISE sector is a typical case of a sector that has gradually developed deeper links with governmental policies and politics: “(...) the progressive institutionalization and professionalization of the field over the years, through public schemes increasingly linked to active labour market policies, generated strong pressures to make the social mission instrumental to the integration of the disadvantaged workers into the labour market” (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010: 237).

Table 10: Key characteristics of sheltered and social workplaces in Flanders

	Sheltered workplaces	Social workplaces
Target group	People with a physical or mental disability	People with psychosocial issues
Target market	assembly, packaging, recycling, processing, mailing in various sectors: printing, electronics, pharmaceuticals, landscaping, food industry, woodwork, metalwork, IT, plastic	landscaping services, restaurant services, tourism, cleaning and maintenance, second-hand use and recycling, construction and renovation, food services, biological agriculture, bicycle repair services, small production workshops (wood, metal, textile, packaging)
Origins	Emerged in the 1950s-'60s with the overall aim of providing care and meaningful activities for those with disabilities	Emerged in the 1980s as experiments in providing alternative employment for specific target group (long-term unemployed, low or no education)

Since the 1970s, WISEs have been gradually institutionalised in the governmental labour market policies, secured more access to public funding and established themselves as partners in the policy design (Lemaître, Nyssens, & Platteau, 2005; Nyssens, 2006;

¹⁰ By federal law: “Wet betreffende de Sociale Reclassering van de Mindervaliden”, April 4th, 1963

¹¹ Ordinance by the Flemish Government: “Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot aanpassing van de regelgeving met betrekking tot de integratie op de arbeidsmarkt van personen met een handicap binnen het beleidsdomein Werk en Sociale Economie”, November 17th, 2006

¹² By Flemish Decree: “Decreet inzake sociale werkplaatsen”, July 14th, 1998

Vanheeswijck & Breda, 2017). This evolution fits in the wider European context of labour market policies. Starting from the 1990s, labour market policies throughout Europe shifted towards the so-called active welfare state approach, a policy strategy for “promoting the employability and labour-market participation of unemployed people” (Berkel, Graaf, & Sirovátka, 2011: 1).

Thus, WISEs are not only subsidised for providing sustainable and adjusted labour in and of itself, but gradually, additional principles of active labour-market participation started to gain political support. In 1999, the social economy in Flanders was institutionalised as a distinct policy domain by the Flemish government with its own appointed minister. However, social and sheltered workplaces were still regulated by their own respective legislative framework. Befitting the Flemish neocorporatist context, the representative peak associations in the sector engaged in policy negotiations with the Flemish government in working towards a unified legislative framework for the sector: in 2006 both peak associations established a separate organisation in which they both formed the board of directors, with the explicit goal of promoting collaboration.

They declared their objective towards a unified framework and established some of the basic principles for such a framework, among others: attaining objective selection workers eligible for WISE positions, individual financing of workers’ wages (so-called rucksack model) and entrepreneurial autonomy (De Mey, Breda, & Van Landeghem, 2008). While the negotiations with the Flemish government started around this time (2006–2008), it was not until 2013 that the unifying WISE Decree was approved. The coalition government of that time did not succeed in reaching a consensus on the ensuing governmental ordinances that would implement the legislation. The following coalition government (with a new Minister of Social Economy, from another political party) approved a new ordinance to implement the WISE Decree, which would then go into effect on April 1st, 2015. However, this new ordinance was suspended by the Council of State (*Raad van State*, highest administrative court) in January 2016 because some of the regulations meant to guide the transition from the old to the new legislation violated the legal certainty and financial viability of WISEs¹³. By 2017, a new ordinance was approved, and the WISE Decree was reactivated on January 1st, 2019.

¹³ *Raad van State*, January 26th, 2016, nr. 233.620. The regulations regarding the transition were unclear about the changing calculation of the subsidies, which could result in significant financial instability for the organisations. The Council determined this to be a matter of pressing concern that warranted an immediate suspension of the ordinance. The legal dispute had been initiated by two SHWs.

In sum, although sheltered and SOWs both provide employment and vocational training to disadvantaged workers and are closely entangled with the government in terms of public service delivery and policy formulation, they are characterised by a different target population, target market and historical origins, yet, both social and sheltered workplaces have evolved towards becoming a sector that is an institutionalised part of the active labour market policies of the Flemish government. Since 2019, they are for the first time in their history regulated under one legislative framework.

4.4 Methods

Our case study in this chapter is built on data collected in two phases. Firstly, we analysed the legislative reforms in the WISE sector in Flanders, with a focus on NPM-style reforms. We used this analysis as our guide in collecting qualitative interviews with both key policy actors as well as individual WISEs. Secondly, we used a subset of the dataset presented in the previous chapter to extract the WISEs included in our survey. From this basis, we could identify some of the key characteristics of their relationship to the Flemish government (as discussed in the previous chapter), as well as some core elements regarding their management. Table 11 below presents an overview of the methods used. In sum, 53 WISEs are included in our case study: 21 in a qualitative study (semi-structured interviews) and 43 through survey research (because of the random sample in our survey design, 11 organisations were included in both phases of the study: $43+21-11=53$ organisations).

We collected these data during 2017–2018, which falls in the period right after the newly approved governmental ordinance (in response to its suspension by the Council of State). This period of uncertainty provides an interesting opportunity to examine the relationship between policy changes, practical implementation and organisational responses. First, all organisations were confronted with these changes during several months in 2015, and there was an active debate on these reforms in the sector. Also, the peak associations had been providing information and training to the professionals in the field in light of the coming reforms. Second, the suspension provided us with the opportunity to speak with the CEOs as they were reflecting on how to move forward as the decree would be reinstated by January 1st, 2019.

4.4.1 Qualitative research: legislation, organisations and policymakers

First, we delved into the particularities of the new decree by analysing relevant legislative documentation and discussed the implications of these reforms with various professionals in the field through several interviews (although these were not recorded). These were done

mostly with professionals of the WISEs' umbrella organisations (of both social and sheltered workplaces). The goal of these conversations was to establish an understanding of the new legislation as well as of the perceptions of professionals regarding this legislation.

Second, we set out to systematically explore organisational strategies in the field. To ensure we could reach a diverse group of WISEs, we trained master's students in Public Administration at Ghent University to conduct interviews with the general managers (CEO or equivalent) and other professionals of selected WISEs. If the general manager was unavailable, other leading managers were interviewed (e.g., personnel manager, financial manager, strategic manager). Students also collected information on the main activities from the organisation through yearly reports. In order to ensure data quality, the authors intensively coached the students both in terms of theory and knowledge of the field as well as interview quality. Regarding theory and knowledge of the field, we organised four three-hour training sessions: two on theories of governance and organisational hybridity and two sessions on the historical development of WISE in Flanders and the latest legislative reforms. These last two sessions were presented by experts in the field: one by a manager of a social workplace who is also active in various network organisations; the other by a political actor involved in the latest policy reform. Regarding the quality of the research, students were obligated to attend three face-to-face feedback sessions in which preliminary findings were discussed at length.

Third, and parallel to this systematic exploration, we conducted semi-structured interviews with four key actors involved in the latest policy reform: a member of the political cabinet of the previous Minister of Social Economy (who was a central figure in the negotiations), the leading managers of the two main peak associations (one for social workplaces and one for sheltered workplaces), and the director-general of the governmental department of Labour and Social Economy. These interviews were focused on the development of the latest reform, the response by the actors and their assessment of the ensuing legislative framework.

4.4.2 Survey data

Lastly, we used the survey data that were presented in the previous chapter. We selected only the SOWs and SHWs from that dataset. All SOWs and SHWs were included in the initial population dataset, of which 43 SOWs and SHWs partook in the survey. First, we focused on the relationship between WISEs and the Flemish government, as was done in the previous chapter. Second, we used additional survey data on managerial practices, mainly the use of specific management instruments.

Table 11: Overview of data collection (WISE research)

Total included	WISEs	53 ^(*)					
		Survey (10/2017–05/2018)		Interviews ^(***) (04/2017–06/2017)		Population ^(**)	
	SOWs	30	69.8%	14	66.7%	90	65.2%
	SHWs	13	30.2%	7	33.3%	48	34.8%
		43	100%	21	100%	138	100%
<p>Interviews (4) with key decision-makers in the policy process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak associations (SHW & SOW) (2) • Former Ministerial Cabinet (1) • Dept. of Labour and Social Economy (1) 							
<p>(*) Because of the random selection in the survey, 11 organisations were included that were also interviewed, giving a total of 53 (= 43 + 21 – 11) organisations.</p> <p>(**) The number of SOWs and SHWs in our mapping population is slightly lower than the officially reported numbers because some WISEs are enterprises that combine multiple legal nonprofit entities that are each individually recognised as either SHW or SOW. We counted such combinations as one organisation.</p> <p>(***) In two cases we counted organisations that combined a large SHW with a small SOW as SHW (i.e., their dominant activity).</p>							

4.5 Findings

We will first present a quick recap of the key characteristics of WISEs that we found in the survey that was presented in the previous chapter. Next, we will look at the new legislative framework, and discuss to what extent this framework introduces NPM-style reforms in the sector. We will then turn to the role of WISEs and their umbrella organisation in shaping how this legislative framework is formed in practice and how organisations deal with this new context.

When analysing the legislative framework and organisational strategies we focus on three points of friction: the *standardisation* of the intake process of disadvantaged workers with psychosocial issues, the increased focus on *reintegration* (i.e., the transition of disadvantaged workers to the normal labour market) and the use of business-like *management tools* in support of work integration trajectories.

4.5.1 A quick recap: WISE in numbers

We presented the main findings of our survey in the previous chapter. In this paragraph, we want to briefly reiterate some of the key characteristics of WISEs in our survey. Table 12 presents those key findings. Interestingly, underlining the hybrid character of these organisations, managers of WISEs invariably view their organisation as an enterprise (avg. of 4.81 on a five-point scale, with a minimum score of 4). Furthermore, these managers see their organisations as primarily focused on social capital (providing a sense of belonging) and service delivery (providing a service that fulfils a specific societal need) and only to a lesser extent focused on advocacy ([trying to] influence policymakers) or their political role (striving for social or political change). Regarding different advocacy strategies, we found that managers report being mostly active in umbrella organisations, compared to other strategies. Furthermore, we learned that the WISEs are on average slightly more dependent on market-based income than public funding. In terms of employees, SHWs are on average larger than SOWs, with the SOWs in our survey reporting between 8 and 450 employees and SHWs between 150 and 949.

Table 12: Overview of WISEs (survey data)

Type & roles (1–5)		SHW	SOW	Total
Enterprise	avg.	4.77	4.83	4.81
	n	13	29	42
Service delivery	avg.	3.38	4.80	4.37
	n	13	30	43
Social capital	avg.	4.69	4.80	4.77
	n	13	30	43
Advocacy	avg.	2.54	3.67	3.33
	n	13	30	43
Political	avg.	2.45	3.13	2.93
	n	13	30	43
Income (percentages)		SHW	SOW	Total
Public funding	avg.	45.70%	41.32%	42.42%
	n	7	21	28
Market	avg.	54.30%	53.35%	53.59%
	n	7	21	28
Community	avg.	0.00%	5.33%	4.00%
	n	7	21	28
Employees (averages)		SHW	SOW	Total
Total employees	avg.	416.77	102.44	204.60
	n	13	27	40
	<i>min.</i>	150	8	8
	<i>max.</i>	949	450	949

4.5.2 A new decree: a new public management for WISEs?

After being about ten years in the making, a new Flemish decree¹⁴ went into effect as of January 1st, 2019 (*Maatwerkdecreet*; literal translation: ‘customised work decree’, from here on called the ‘WISE Decree’). Actually, the reform was first introduced in 2015, but it was suspended in 2016 after legal proceedings by two SHWs (the cause were problems with transitional measures that were supposed to handle the change from the old to the new legislation). The goal was to bring the Flemish policy in line with EU regulations regarding state support for economic activities, as well as to mitigate the perennial waiting lists for disadvantaged workers. This, combined with the insight that only a few disadvantaged workers succeed in securing a job in the normal labour market (see Table 10 discussed earlier), the WISE Decree aimed to address these waiting lists. At crucial points in the legislation, several NPM-style principles are introduced: incentivising competition and efficiency, business-like management techniques, standardisation of the workforce as well as strengthening the role of the decentralised labour market agency.

Firstly, there is the abrogation of the distinct legal forms of SOWs and SHWs in favour of a unified framework of so-called customised work enterprises.¹⁵ The intended goal of this unification is to establish customised employment and support (hence the name) for the individual worker by simplifying the legislative framework. It also continues the possibility for for-profits to become eligible for public funding to set up WISE divisions in their company. This might also, however, introduce more competition in the sector.

Second, the law formally requires WISEs to use specific management procedures and instruments such as quality management, sustainability reporting and self-evaluations as well as personal development profiles for the employees (i.e., documenting the evolution of their capabilities). The assumption is that these tools can improve the quality of the individual work integration trajectories as well as organisational efficiency.

Third, the procedure for selecting eligible disadvantaged workers has changed dramatically, at least for those with workers with psychosocial issues. For those with a disability, the existing standards remained unchanged. For those workers experiencing psychosocial issues, an international instrument was introduced to standardise the intake procedure the International

¹⁴ To be clear: ‘decree’ designates a Flemish law. The term ‘decree’ is used to distinguish Flemish laws from federal laws (which is called ‘Law’).

¹⁵ In Dutch: *Maatwerkbedrijven*. As our data were collected before 2019, we differentiate throughout the study between sheltered and social workplaces when discussing the cases examined.

Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). Before this change, the admission criteria were defined in more general terms, i.e., being long-term unemployed (five years), being low-educated and having some form of psychosocial issues. The ICF instrument now introduces a score (between 42 and 173) for each employee which is used as the basis for a final evaluation.

Lastly, the governmental agency VDAB (the Flemish Labour Market Agency) is now given responsibility for the selection (ICF method) as well as the evaluation of workers with regards to (re)integration into the normal labour market. Regional agency administrators will have to perform the ICF measurement as well as evaluate the reintegration possibilities for WISE employees. Whereas previous legislations viewed the overarching goal of WISEs as providing a long-term, stable job where reintegration was always part of the goal, the new legislation more explicitly emphasises reintegration as a goal to strive for (e.g., reintegration now has its own chapter in the Decree), including a formally defined target for reintegration (i.e., 10% of workers will be screened) to incentivise WISEs to increase their efforts towards reintegration.

4.5.3 Who steers? Unravelling the WISE-government nexus

In this section, we aim to unravel both formal and informal dynamics characteristic for the WISE-Flemish government nexus using the latest policy reform as our focal point.

a. Eligibility: standardising the means of recruitment

From the start of the policy negotiations in 2009, the actors involved wanted to construct a new selection process in order to provide an unambiguous and transparent selection of persons eligible to work in WISEs. This goal was shared by both peak associations and governmental actors. It was already one principle of the joint strategy by the peak associations in 2006 and was confirmed during our interviews as one of the principles on which the policymakers agreed. While the actors agreed on the principle, they were less clear about the means to achieve it. Then, somewhere during the early negotiations with the Flemish government, representatives of the VDAB proposed the ICF as a possible tool for selection. ICF is an instrument developed by the World Health Organization in 2001 for measuring health and disability, which the VDAB believed could be used to adapt according to the needs of WISEs. With the ICF, an individual score could be assigned to possible candidates for WISE employment. This score would then be used as part of the final motivation regarding the individual's eligibility. While the ICF would result in standardised scores for each individual, the final motivation would still have to be made by an administrator of the agency's disability department. The construction of this adjusted ICF instrument was coordinated by the VDAB

and developed in cooperation with the WISEs and their peak associations. The instrument itself is not part of the WISE Decree, which only stipulates that the government can set the list of criteria used for determining eligibility; the instrument itself has been implemented by executive ordinance. Despite being defined in this ordinance, there is still a lot of room for discussion on how to precisely implement the instrument in practice, and it has been under ongoing evaluation. There is a discussion between WISEs and administrators over the impact of this instrument. Throughout our interviews, WISE managers claimed that the ICF instrument would lead to the exclusion of the stronger profiles (which the VDAB confirms to some extent), which in turn could result in a relative increase of so-called weaker profiles among the people eligible for WISE employment (which the VDAB denies). This might result, some managers claim, in an imbalance between stronger and weaker employees in terms of the organisation's capacity in the market, thereby negatively impacting the productivity of WISEs. Interestingly, this discussion between sector and administration takes place in formal workgroups that are part of the institutionalised policy process. In the period of our data collection, there were ongoing negotiations on how to implement the procedures for selection, which led most actors to be reluctant to share more information. Yet, these negotiations illustrate how closely umbrella organisations are involved in the policy process.

The participation of WISEs in the policy process via their peak associations is echoed in our survey findings. Asked how—and to what extent—WISEs are active in policy formulation through participation, we found that peak associations played a vital role (see Table 13). Repeated direct personal contacts between WISEs and the ministerial department only occurred for 37.21% of WISEs. Interestingly, personal contacts with administrators scored much higher (81.40% at least 'repeatedly'), which might be explained by the fact that public administrators play an increasingly important role in assessing both the influx and transition process of disadvantaged workers. In sum, these findings show how peak associations primarily serve as sectoral connections to policymakers, while the WISEs themselves are mainly preoccupied with managing the administrative dimension of policy work.

Table 13: Frequency of participation in activities of peak associations (from the start of 2015 up to the time of the survey)

Frequency	SHW	SOW	Total
<i>n</i>	13	30	43
Not	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Once	0.00%	3.33%	2.33%
Repeatedly	23.08%	26.67%	25.58%
Often	7.69%	26.67%	20.93%
Very often	69.23%	43.33%	51.16%

b. Setting the goal of reintegration

The involvement of WISEs in the policy process was also apparent in the discussions concerning the reintegration of workers into the normal labour market. Attention to this issue has always been part of the policy debate concerning WISEs in coalitions with socialist Ministers of Social Economy to the latest coalition with Flemish nationalist (and more liberal) ministers. As we stated earlier, the fact that 64.5% (SOWs) to 75.8% (SHWs) of WISE employees do not leave the organisation for employment in regular enterprises frames the debate on reintegration policies. In the new WISE Decree, reintegration is more explicitly emphasised. Some argue that this can be related to the growing importance of more liberal-oriented political parties in the previous and current coalition government, as one respondent stated: “It was the [liberal-oriented] party that achieved in getting reintegration into [the Decree]. So, reintegration became a real fetish. Really.”¹⁶ There is indeed more acknowledgement towards reintegration in the legislative framework; for instance, there is now a separate chapter on reintegrating both in the WISE Decree and the ensuing governmental ordinance. However, this does not necessarily mean that reintegration has become a narrowly defined goal for each WISE. In fact, looking at how the policy was designed and how organisations perceive these changes, there is still considerable room for manoeuvre. The resulting policy framework has not only been determined by this abovementioned ‘fetish’ since the policy process included the WISEs and their peak associations, the administrative agency, the ministerial department, as well as input from other political parties in the coalition government, and from representatives of labour unions and employers’ associations.

¹⁶ Translated from Dutch by the author.

Throughout the steps of the multi-layered regulatory framework, new conditions have been added: the legislative framework consists of different levels (from the Decree to executive ordinances) and while the WISE Decree emphasises reintegration, it does not set specific targets and still leaves much room for manoeuvre. For instance, the Decree states that in its evaluation, the VDAB takes into account the possibilities for sustainable employment as well as the personal situation and the continuity of operations of the WISE. The governmental ordinance that implements the WISE Decree picks up these three criteria and adds the dimensions which are considered relevant for the evaluation of the personal situation of the employee (i.e., health, mobility, age, familial situation, financial situation and the individual capacity and motivation for labour career management). The ministerial ordinance which followed later still adds a new dimension to the reintegration evaluation process by stating that a specific target of employees (i.e., 10% of all target-group employees) should be evaluated by the VDAB. The WISE Decree itself requires only that every WISE employee should be evaluated within five years, based on at least three elements: the personal development profile of the employee, information provided by the organisation and a conversation with the employee. However, while there are these general targets for evaluating WISE employees (10% of all employees, each employee evaluated after five years), no actual transition targets are set. Not all of the professionals in the WISEs that we spoke with seemed to understand this; some seem to think the legislation has set a hard target of 10% in terms of reintegration. At the policy level, the actors are more attuned to the complexity of the legislation, and we found that they generally agree on the room to manoeuvre within the formal framework: despite the political affirmation of reintegration, no mandatory targets were set and the criteria for evaluation are still very broad and encompass both characteristics of the employee (motivation, personal situation) and the organisations (continuity of its operations). Yet, the fact that there is now *some* form of target still causes some concern. A respondent described it as an important precedent: "(...) I do think that this will hang over the sector as a sword of Damocles. That, if one day someone would say 'and now we will regulate 'reintegration' more strictly and sharpen it', that you might have a problem." Such a more strict approach to reintegration is possible since the actual procedures and targets regarding reintegration are not set by law, but by the executive (governmental and ministerial) ordinance. Some fear that ensuing coalition governments might opt for such a more strict approach to reintegration, which they see as part of a growing liberal political discourse.

Reintegration has since long been a policy concern as WISEs have become gradually more institutionalised as part of the active labour market policies. It seems that the latest Decree, coordinated by the cabinet of a socialist minister in a coalition government with liberal parties, has formally emphasised reintegration as a policy goal, but still leaves lots of room for

administrators and WISEs to manoeuvre in terms of the evaluation of workers in practice. On the whole, this legislative framework is the expression of a long-negotiated political compromise: for some, the emphasis on reintegration is achieved; for others, there is room for a case-by-case evaluation, and hard targets are avoided.

4.5.4 Organisational response strategies of WISE

The policy framework creates a significant amount of room for manoeuvre for both administrators and WISEs, which increases uncertainty: administrators are unsure how to exactly implement these new rules and regulations in practice, which in turn also means that WISEs do not know how and if policies will be enforced. In preparation for the renewed implementation of the new regulations, many organisations express doubt over the capacity of the VDAB to be able to handle all the tasks it has been assigned and how organisations will be impacted by the new eligibility and evaluation criteria. In this section, we draw on our data to examine how the new decree has impacted organisational behaviour. Using the model of Pache and Santos, which we have discussed earlier, we identify the possible strategies used by CSOs in response to external expectations. However, considering that our data collection included only the perspective of the general managers, we do not know to what extent there are internal organisational differences between different groups of members (e.g., management, board of directors, professional trainers, target-group employees). Therefore, we will have to reduce the model to only include the perspective of the general managers. Specifically, this means that we can only look at situations in which management is either concerned (adherence to a single side of the demand) or not (absence) about the expectations discussed. Table 14 below shows this adjusted model.

Table 14: Reduced model of organisational response strategies (WISE)

<i>External expectations</i>	<i>Adherence to external expectations by management</i>	<i>Likelihood of adopting response strategies</i>			
		Compromise	Avoidance	Defiance	Manipulation
Means	Absence	high	high	low	low
	Single	low	high	high	low
Goals	Absence	low	high	high	low
	Single	low	high	high	high

a. Eligibility: bargaining the means of recruitment

Standardising selection is seen as a legitimate goal by most actors in the sectors, but there is uncertainty about its actual implementation. At first glance, the formal rules seem rather strict and clear: only those individuals that have passed the eligibility screening by the agency administrators can be hired by WISEs. One consequence is that all vacancies have to be communicated to the agency, which then places the vacancy in its job database or looks at possible candidates in the registration pool. WISEs cannot directly hire a new employee; the agency will assign workers. However, the ICF instrument is used by administrators to make an assessment in which they have discretionary room for a final motivated decision. Some WISE managers express doubt about the capabilities of the agency administrators to use the ICF instrument, and they are uncertain on how strict the ICF scores will be used in the final assessment. In terms of external expectations, the standardisation process concerns a functional dimension of the WISEs and internally, it is experienced as an unclear principle that might have a significant impact on the balance of the WISE workforce. Therefore, the hypothesis is that organisations have a higher likelihood of using *avoidance* and *defiance* strategies. For those organisations that are less concerned with the abilities of administrators to implement the new rules, *compromise* and *avoidance* are more likely. Indeed, we find both these strategies used by the organisations, while we could not identify any defiance strategies used by WISEs.

Compromise is often used, even for those organisations that express concerns about the selection process, specifically through *bargaining* with the regional agency administrators: agency administrators are often invited to visit the organisation so that managers can communicate what kind of workers are most suited for that specific labour environment. *Avoidance* strategies are some of the most used strategies and take the form of constructing some form of *buffering* between the organisation and the agency by a form of self-selection: WISEs find a candidate in their own social and organisational network, which they then send to the agency for screening, informing the agency on the qualities of the individual and the reasons why they would be a good fit for the organisation. Some WISEs even do a pre-screening of the candidate before they are sent to the agency for final screening.

Two factors are important in understanding why compromise and avoidance strategies are the most used strategies in dealing with the standardisation of eligibility. One, ICF screening is a crucial instrument but remains part of the functional dimension of WISEs. It concerns the means with which WISEs organise their productivity (i.e., the capabilities of the workers to impact the production process) as well as their job training and coaching (i.e., what type of training has to be used?). It does not change the goal of the organisation: WISEs will still

provide suitable labour for disadvantaged workers. Adjusting to means is relatively more low-cost than adjusting to new goals for the organisation; therefore, more compliance-based strategies are to be expected. Second, even though the process includes significant discretionary space for decision-making, the formal framework assigns the VDAB with all the administrative decision-making. Compromise and avoidance strategies are relatively low-cost strategies for WISEs to influence the administrative decision-making process, while defiance-based strategies would require organisations to reject these new rules without having alternatives available (i.e., they cannot hire workers that are not screened, unless they are willing to pay the full wages, which is considered too costly). At the policy level, however, we saw that peak associations engage in ongoing policy negotiations on the use of the ICF instrument. Indeed, these negotiations can also be seen as a form of bargaining (seeking compromise with government officials by negotiating adjustments to the instrument or procedure).

b. Reintegration: dismissing an unattainable goal

The attention to reintegration in the legislative framework was generally seen as an unrealistic political discourse: while in principle the idea is laudable (making sure that disadvantaged workers overcome their difficulties and find other work in non-WISE organisations), many managers remained sceptical about its feasibility. Importantly, the reintegration of workers, more than the selection screening process, refers to the ideological dimension of the organisations (their goals): providing a suitable labour environment for disadvantaged workers. Whereas selection was seen as a means to find eligible workers (with some possible negative side effects of how to balance workforce capabilities and productivity), the focus on reintegration was seen as directly impacting the extent of the autonomy of WISE in providing individual guidance and professional training for their employees. Concerning the organisational strategies, the hypothesis is that WISEs are more likely to engage in *avoidance* and *defiance* strategies. For those organisations that explicitly reject the policy goal of increased reintegration, *manipulation* strategies are also more likely.

Sceptical WISE managers expressed their concerns about increased reintegration based on two main reasons: (a) their experience that there are not many disadvantaged workers that have sufficiently strong capabilities to thrive in non-WISE labour environments and (b) that so-called normal enterprises are not willing to adjust their expectations to the needs of these workers. Concerning the first reason, many managers argue that their past experiences have shown how difficult it is to expect workers to find stable employment. The reaction of an SHW manager illustrates this general belief: “We are realists. In all those years that we have been doing this, one percent has been reintegrated. And of that one percent, fifty percent has

returned. Do I have to put all that energy into that?” For most managers, this experience of low success shows that policies emphasising higher reintegration do not correspond with reality. Concerning the second reason, managers feel that so-called normal enterprises are not looking for WISE workers: “Normal cleaning companies are begging for workers, transportation companies are begging for drivers. Only, when a single mom or dad with three, four children, it is impossible for them to function in a system in which these cleaning companies, in which these transportation companies work.”

Given these concerns, WISEs turn to *defiance* strategies by *dismissing* the new rules. Two reasons contribute to this occurrence of defiance: the general belief that the administrative capacity for enforcement is low and the belief that the achievement of higher integration percentages is unattainable. One manager states that reintegration could never be the primary goal of his organisation: “We are not against the whole reintegration story, but I wouldn’t turn it into the spearhead of policy, because the people who believe that that is the essence of WISEs know nothing about private entrepreneurship and they know nothing of protected entrepreneurship.” Moreover, many managers believe that higher reintegration targets would threaten the organisational functioning as this would come down to some of their strongest workers leaving. These in turn are believed—due to the implementation of the new ICF instrument—to be replaced by weaker disadvantaged workers, while the level of market competition remains unchanged. These strong beliefs, coupled with the expectation of low administrative capabilities for enforcement, have in general led to a dismissive approach towards the reintegration policies.

Alternatively, we found one SOW that developed an interesting *avoidance* strategy in their rejection of the reintegration policies. They established two cooperative enterprises (i.e., an enterprise form with limited profit distribution), which they use not only for commercial activities that do not fit with their nonprofit SOW but also as an organisation to which some of their employees can migrate and which then also counts as reintegration. One of these enterprises is a cooperation with two other CSOs (one WISE, one wellbeing organisation). This strategy enables the organisation to alter its internal processes: some forms of reintegration can be oriented towards these cooperatives under their own control, instead of towards external non-WISE organisations.

Interestingly, in some social workplaces, we found several instances of *compliance* with the goals of reintegration, where the main driver behind this compliance is the strong consistency between the internal goals and the policy of reintegration. Three social workplaces explicitly stated that the reintegration of workers is one of their primary goals. The first SOW refers to

itself as a reintegration company and has set its own internal target for reintegration (target of 10% of all workers; in 2016 they achieved a 13% transition rate to employment in non-WISE organisations). Some transitions of employees are not focused on reintegration but are used to make room for hiring new employees that can then enter the reintegration programme. For instance, the SOW engages in partnerships with some SHWs who can hire some of their employees that need to be in a sheltered environment for a longer time. For employees that are aged 55 years or older, the SOW employs some of them under a different programme, which means they lose their WISE wage subsidies, but this makes room for new hires under the WISE programme. The manager of the second SOW also refers to reintegration as a primary goal: “We deliver two outputs; we deliver re-use and we deliver reintegration processes.” Even so, this manager agrees with the fact that there is little administrative capacity for enforcement and that reintegration is mostly a political discourse. The third SOW provides guidance for people struggling with addictions and sees the goal of regular employment in the labour market as part of the process (about 20% of their disadvantaged workers leave the organisation, either to work in other WISEs or non-WISE organisations).

c. Management tools: whose expectations?

The management tools used in WISEs are part of their functional demands, i.e., the means by which they organise the economic activity in their organisations. They respond to certain expectations, either by how the government expects them to organise themselves, by how the organisations themselves believe they should act and by how organisations believe their own sector expects them to act. In our survey, we were able to measure these expectations. First, we asked the respondent to indicate which management tools from a list of tools they used:¹⁷ SWOT analysis, SMART analysis, lean management, benchmarking, pay-for-performance incentives, quality standards (e.g., ISO, EFQM) and key performance indicators (KPIs). We learned that, except for pay-for-performance principles, all of the tools were reported as frequently used by at least half of all WISEs, with SWOT (70%), quality standards (75%) and KPIs (66%) being the most frequently used. Second, we asked to indicate what the most important reasons were for using these tools. Table 15 shows the correlations between frequency of use and the reasons for using these tools. Here we see that respondents primarily point to their belief that these tools are standard for their organisation (“We use this tool because we are convinced that this is how it should be for an organisation like ours.”). Government expectations (“We use this tool because the government expects us to do so.”) or sectoral expectations are only marginally at play (“We use this tool because other

¹⁷ For each instrument, a short definition was presented

organisations in our field do so.”). Thus, the more these management tools are used, the more managers report that this frequent use is related to their own organisational beliefs.

Table 15: Correlation between management tool use and reasons of use (WISE)

REASONS	Management Tools						
	SWOT	SMART	LEAN	Bench- marking	Pay-for- performance(+)	Quality standards	KPIs
The government expects it	-.127	.176	-.285	-.051	-.131	.126	.036
Similar CSOs in our sector do it	-.026	.308(*)	-.261	.243	.108	-.045	.124
A CSO like ours should use it	.216	.516(**)	.417(**)	.378(*)	.627(**)	.419(**)	.459(**)
	<i>Spearman correlations: (*) p<.05; (**) p<.01; n=43; (+) n=42 Management tools: variables ranging from 1 (not) to 5 (often) Reasons: variables ranging from 0 (not) to 3 (most important reason)</i>						

Certain management practices are mandated by the legislative framework: quality management, human resources (including personal development profiles of its employees) and strategic self-evaluations. Yet, our survey results show that it would be an overstatement to portray the new legislative framework as the main driver behind the use of business-like management tools, as WISEs use a multitude of management tools that are not required by legislation. Management tools in general are thus not a response to governmental demands. The belief that organisations should organise themselves according to these management principles seems to stem from the demands in the markets in which WISEs operate. Sheltered workplaces are mostly larger WISEs that perceive their market environment as highly competitive. They strongly depend on contracts with private enterprises, which implies certain expectations in terms of organisational management. As a result, in our interviews with management, we also found them to be frequent users of management tools such as EFQM modelling, lean management, just-in-time organisation, KPIs, and SMART goals. Crucially, managers also indicate that it is a continuous concern to not only meet market demands but to do it in such a way that it fits their organisational goals of providing suitable labour for their workers. Thus, when one manager of a large sheltered workplace speaks about EFQM modelling, he frames it as follows: “Our EFQM says we are a company with three core processes: supply chain, HR and sales. (...) Concerning sales, everything has to meet certain criteria so that our employees can easily manufacture [what is demanded]. Concerning the supply chain, also, simple labour is key, as with for example the division of tasks. We want to make them strong, which means being multipurpose. Also concerning investments revenue is

not key, but the employability of the employees.” Moreover, sheltered workplaces increasingly engage in automation of labour processes in order to meet market demands, whereby managers also point out that automation efforts make the workplace more accessible to their disadvantaged workers. One manager tries to explain the reasoning: “How far do you go towards automation... There where you can use it to improve the work of your people or make their work easier, that is the right decision. Not to exclude people and replace them with robots.” Social workplaces certainly also frequently use various management tools. In certain reuse centres, techniques based on lean and agility management were introduced. One reason for this seems to be the role played by a professional network organisation of reuse centres, that organised information sessions and training on these techniques. Furthermore, KPIs were certainly well established in many social workplaces, although these indicators can of course be very broadly defined. We found that EFQM modelling was also used in many of these SOWs.

Thus, seeing this broad acceptance of management tools, the introduction of certain new instruments could be seen as a minor adjustment for these organisations. Still, certain instruments (e.g., sustainability reporting) introduced by the new legislation were at the time of our data collection not clearly defined, leading managers to wonder what exactly had to be reported. Other instruments, such as the personal development profiles for WISE employees were generally considered as nothing new, and maybe only a new format to a practice that was since long established in the sector. Those few organisations that did not yet have such an instrument were currently developing it. Some smaller SOWs wondered whether they would be able to manage, as their capacity for more administrative work was already limited.

d. Competition: avoiding WISE market pressures

A final set of response strategies concern the way WISEs organise themselves with regards to the level of competition. When managers in the social economy were asked in the survey to assess the level of competition for resources, the response was, on average, that competition for resources was reasonable (3 on a scale of 5). In our interviews, we learned that WISEs can experience competition in different ways. Competition can mean offering the lowest price, or it can mean offering the fastest and most flexible service, or both at the same time. SHWs and SOWs are active in different markets and on different scales. SOWs usually provide services that are linked to a certain region of customers (although some SOWs operate across Flanders): they are most active in markets for reuse and recycling, agriculture, building and renovation, bicycling maintenance, household services, etc. SHWs are larger organisations that are often suppliers for private enterprises, specialised in providing fast on-time delivery of products for particular enterprises. This also means that SHWs are to a certain

degree active on international markets, as they have to compete for contracts with suppliers in low-wage countries. In terms of the model of response strategies, market demands (price, quality, production time, delivery) are not easily distinguishable as *either* means (functional demands) *or* goals (ideological demand) of WISEs. However, from our interviews, we learned that WISEs' managers emphasise that their goods and services are judged like a normal business in the market, so competitive performance is expected. In response to these competitive demands (on price, production time, quality) we see two types of strategies. The first type concerns cooperation between WISEs and can be seen as a form of *manipulation* (i.e., a strong form of noncompliance to external demands). The second type concerns a more compliant strategy of internal reorganisation, a form of *compromise*.

We observed the strategy of *manipulation* in one particular province of Flanders. The WISEs in this province joined in a network organisation that not only served to advocate the contribution of the WISEs to the local and Flemish politicians (specifically, WISEs' contribution to the local economy) but also served as a platform to exchange information. The organisations in this network developed two strategies which Suyoung Kim (2014) labelled as 'dividing' and 'merging' the market (in a study on organisational responses to increased competition in South Korea). A *market division* was first established through a so-called gentlemen's agreement or non-aggression pact between WISEs. Instead of entering into competition with each other for new contracts and clients, WISEs agreed to refrain from dishonest competition, respect each other's specialities and not engage in competition when the activity would require large investments. Also, when WISEs find they do not have the expertise for a certain contract, they agree to inform other WISEs (which do have this expertise) about the existence of these possible contracts. This way, WISEs would not compete in each other's domain, or compete for the same contracts and clients.

Merging the market is not a manipulation strategy but a cooperative strategy aimed at *avoidance*. This merging occurred in different regions in Flanders. It mostly took the form of mergers of different organisations into larger organisations. While this merger strategy is certainly used to reduce the overall operational costs, some organisations engaged in (or were planning to engage in) mergers because the new legislation requires a minimum of 20 full-time equivalent employees (and was thus a highly compliant strategy): for such smaller organisations, mergers were a question of organisational survival. Mergers were also used to create an overarching organisation that handles the shared services of personnel and resource management of several WISEs at once. Interestingly, we found that some organisations handled this sharing of resources in a more informal manner, by making WISE

employees available for other organisations when they were in short-term need of additional workforce capacity because of temporary spikes in market demand.

The second set of strategies has to do with the internal organisation of WISES as a *compliant* strategy to market demands. We found that some sheltered workplaces developed strategic partnerships with for-profit enterprises. They are highly dependent on contracts with the private sector, and in order to create some stability for their workforce, they seek to establish a relationship with large enterprises by orienting their production process in function of these specific partners. The risk of this strategy is that over-reliance on a single enterprise can cause substantial financial risk. Other SHWs choose the opposite path: instead of focusing on one partner, they specialise in rapidly changing production processes which they can continuously adjust to the needs of new clients.

4.6 Discussion

In this chapter, we explored how NPM-style reforms have been introduced in the legislative framework concerning WISEs in Flanders, whereby we focused on how WISEs operate in relation to these changes. Building on the survey findings (presented in the previous chapter) on 43 WISEs, we also added a more in-depth qualitative exploration of organisational strategies on 21 WISEs. On the whole, this chapter provides an empirical contribution to the literature on organisational strategies in a context of intense policy interaction with government. There are some important limitations to our data collection. Concerning the survey results, the same considerations as discussed in the previous chapter hold here as well: the data are self-reported, based on perceptions, and originate from a single source (managers of the WISEs). The qualitative data have the same limitations, and thus also do not include the perspective of other members of the organisations (e.g., board of directors, trainers, target-group employees).

WISEs have gradually become institutionalised in the state structures and their labour market policies. Over the last four decades, social and sheltered workshops have organised themselves in peak associations, have gained access to public funding in exchange for providing employment and vocational training for disadvantaged workers, and together with the Flemish government, they have initiated an institutional reform towards becoming a unified sector. This chapter has briefly described this evolution, pointing to the close interaction between sector and government in the development of WISE policies as well as the gradual institutionalisation of the sector in the government's labour market policies. We then focused

on the latest legislative reform, which forms the preliminary culmination of this historical institutional change. We argue that it is preliminary since some questions remain open: given the fact that SOWs and SHWs are now regulated by a single legislative framework, will they, in fact, also start mixing their target-group employees? Also, despite some early attempts, the two main peak associations have as of yet not merged and remain separate entities. Given the importance of peak associations in the Flemish context, this could be a crucial factor in the further evolution of the sector.

Based on our survey results, we concluded in the previous chapter that peak associations remain important policy actors although we could not say what the outcome of their advocacy work was. For WISEs, we found that peak associations are their most important advocacy strategy. In fact, this chapter shows that peak associations were actively involved in the development of the latest legislation, starting with their calls for unification more than fifteen years ago. They were closely involved during the negotiations and have continuously been involved in further evaluation of the new instruments (e.g., ICF screening). We cannot say which aspects of the resulting legislative framework can be assigned to the influence of the peak associations. The complexity of the policy development was too extensive for this, and our case study did not entail a complete tracing of the policy process. However, we learned from our interview that the policy framework is both a political (see reintegration) as well as an administrative compromise (see the ICF screening).

4.6.1 A new public management for WISE?

To discuss the impact of NPM-style reforms, this chapter presented an analysis of the new regulatory framework. Starting from the WISE Decree, we found three key NPM elements that were introduced: the standardisation of the eligibility criteria (ICF screening), the emphasis on reintegration and the emphasis on organisational management tools.

a. Reintegration

Of these three, reintegration is the element that has gathered the most political discussion. It concerns directly the ideological discussion regarding the function of WISEs: do they employ disadvantaged workers because of their inherent value (i.e., providing a sense of belonging and meaning through labour), or are WISEs primarily a training ground for future employment elsewhere (i.e., socialising disadvantaged workers in labour market discipline)? Formally, the WISE Decree and its ensuing ordinances emphasise the reintegration process, setting certain terms and expectations for the evaluation of WISE employees. At the same time, the legislation is layered, providing new nuances and criteria, that leaves some room for

manoeuvre for both administrators and organisations. It is the result of political compromise, balancing the discursive emphasis on reintegration with the concern for contextually situated evaluation. Still, future governments can use the administrative tools at their disposal to further narrow the criteria for reintegration. Turning to how WISEs deal with these formal demands in practice, we see that most of the managers agree with the idea of reintegration but dismiss the expectation that much higher numbers can be achieved. Even though WISEs have become institutionalised in the state structures, they do not passively accept the political shift concerning integration policy. Institutionalisation has not led to submissive orientation. This dismissal of the formal framework is not only driven by their past experiences with reintegration, but also by the belief that many workers would not be able to function in a normal labour environment and that these normal enterprises are not willing to adapt to these workers. Moreover, there is doubt concerning the capacity of administrators to properly evaluate WISE employees with regards to reintegration. Thus, the dismissive strategy that we identified stems from this combination of experience, strongly held beliefs and the doubt concerning the capacity for regulatory oversight. Yet, we also found that when organisational goals are aligned with the demand for more reintegration, these concerns regarding the administrative capacity are less at play: it is the organisational goal that drives the internal focus on reintegration.

It remains to be seen if and how the change in policy discourse concerning labour market integration will affect future developments. If it is indeed, as one of the respondents mentioned, a sword of Damocles looming over the sector, the groundworks on which more NPM-style reintegration targets will be introduced.

b. Eligibility: ICF screening

Regarding the ICF screening, we found that there is general acceptance of the core principle of creating objective criteria to assess whether workers are eligible for WISE employment. At the start of the formal negotiations with the government, both peak associations spoke in favour of more unambiguous and transparent selection criteria. Nevertheless, while there was agreement on the principle, the practical implementation remained unsure for some time. It was a proposal of the VDAB that brought the ICF instrument into play. Here, we see how this process has led to two strategies: organisations try to find informal ways of dealing with the new regulations, and at the policy level, the instrument is being refined through ongoing negotiations. Some WISEs seek to compromise with the labour market agency (by sharing their insights and expertise with local administrators), while others try to buffer the impact of the regulations (by pre-selecting or even pre-screening possible candidates).

We argue in our findings that the screening process relates more to the means than the goals of the organisations, and is therefore relatively more low-cost to adjust to, which leads to more compliance-based strategies. Furthermore, the administrative decision-making power of the VDAB gives WISEs little formal room to develop alternative strategies: without these administrative decisions, they cannot hire subsidised employees.

c. Management tools

Overall, we find that when it comes to the use of management tools, WISEs are not responding to any specific demands in the legislative framework. Certainly, government demands include the use of specific management practices (quality management, human resources, strategic self-evaluations). Apart from these demands, however, we found a strong belief in the usefulness of business-like management tools, both in our quantitative and qualitative data. We see WISEs responding to how they believe the market in which they operate functions and to how organisations such as their own should function in this context. These expectations seem to play a larger role than governmental demands. There seems to be rather high flexibility in adopting new management techniques, which fits the hypotheses of our reduced model of organisational responses: management tools are clearly functional tools that managers believe can be adapted to the specific goals of the organisations.

However, the question then remains: is the use of business-like practices and the occurrence of market-type relations always indicative of managerialism? When does management become so dominant that it can be seen as managerialism? Our case study focused on organisational strategies identified through surveys and semi-structured interviews with managers and leading professionals. However, at the level of discourse, we see that managers still ascribe strongly to their role in community building and their mission with regards to the WISE employees. Of course, one point of discussion is whether these managerial beliefs align with the experiences of the WISE employees themselves. Thus, in order to assess the dominance of management practices and ideas, more research is needed on how management strategies affect the WISE employees with regards to their individual development and their working environment. While we have gained some insight into the managerial practices of these WISEs, little can be said about their concrete impact on the social mission.

4.6.2 Competition and strategic networks

We found that WISE managers see their organisations as enterprises and that they emphasise that WISEs are expected by their customers to compete in terms of quality and price. Thus, even though our survey shows that in the social economy, competition is, on average,

considered reasonable, our interviews with WISE managers adds some more nuance to their understanding of competition. Moreover, competitive expectations regarding WISEs (in terms of price, quality, production time, delivery) are not oriented towards either means (functional demands) or goals (ideological demand) of these organisations; they relate to both. Competition can relate directly to the extent to which the labour environment can be adjusted to the needs of the workers, which is why some WISEs opt for automation of production. Competition can also relate to how organisations handle their competitors in the markets. We found that in one particular region, WISEs opted to cooperate with each other. Others have opted for mergers or at least the sharing of certain administrative services.

4.6.3 The roles of WISEs

WISE managers report a higher focus on social capital and service delivery than on other roles. Indeed, they see themselves as enterprises with a specific social mission. This mission is primarily the employment of disadvantaged workers, but in many cases (in our interviews mostly the SOWs), their economic activity also reflects a concern for social change or doing things differently (e.g., reuse centres or sustainable agriculture). WISE managers report being less directly involved in advocacy and in striving for social or political change. In sum, these findings show how peak associations primarily serve as sectoral connections to policymakers, while the WISEs themselves are mainly preoccupied with managing the administrative dimension of policy work.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at how organisations respond to NPM-style reforms, and as such we have expanded the research started in the previous chapter by focusing on a specific sector. We presented a formal analysis of the new regulatory framework regarding WISEs in Flanders, the role of the sector in the policy process and the organisational responses of WISEs in the implementation of the new regulatory framework. We argue that the negotiated policy process along with the room for manoeuvre by the WISEs in the implementation of the new regulatory framework confirms our finding of the institutional layering that occurs in the Flemish neocorporatist context: the elements of NPM that we identified operate next to or on top of the neocorporatist institutions, where negotiation-based agreements still form the core of the institutional framework and market-type elements are added to the institutional nexus—which does not mean they are trivial. In fact, as we have seen, some reforms (such as the emphasis on reintegration' and ICF screening) touch the core target group of these

organisations: the very disadvantaged individuals for whom these organisations are providing employment and training.

What can we learn from this case study regarding the question of governance? In this dissertation, we started from a central proposition found in the literature on governance, namely that traditional structures (such as neocorporatist institutions of exchange) are increasingly coming under pressure by both NPM-style and NPG-style evolutions. In the previous chapter, we concluded that the traditional Flemish institutional exchange between government and civil society across three sectors remains rather stable, although identifiable changes are occurring in the margins that could theoretically further destabilise the existing institutional framework. In the current chapter, we looked deeper into a specific sector, asking how organisations deal with NPM-style reforms in their relationship with the government. We added the dimension of how not all of these NPM-style reforms come 'from' government 'to' civil society, but rather that throughout the policy process, new dimensions are introduced and compromises are established. Adding to this policy development, we see how WISEs have responded to handling expectations from various actors, both in government and in the market. Throughout this process, new elements have been layered on top of the existing negotiation-based institutional framework. We have provided ample illustrations of the complexity of steering modes and principles and the blurred boundaries between civil society, government and market. Our research shows the institutional mix at work through policy networks, strategic interorganisational networks, bureaucratic administrative oversight and market-type management and competition. This does not mean that the underlying traditional institutions have not been changed; it could indeed mean that there has been a qualitative shift in the governance institutions towards both more network-type governance (see the role of strategic networks) and more market-type governance (see the shift from CSO-based experimentation to enterprises). This shift would then have occurred on top of the existing network-type institutions (see the historical development of the sectoral peak associations) and market-type institutions (the blurry boundaries of the social economy).

Some authors have argued that the way forward for dealing with this complexity of institutional mixing and layering lies in metagovernance. For these authors, the role of government lies in balancing different governance modes. To translate these ideas to the sector of WISEs, the government would face quite a challenge as it would have to deal with the well-documented tensions between social and economic goals (Vidal, 2010; Young, Searing, & Brewer, 2016) as well as balancing the market regulation of WISE and non-WISE economic activity. Still, the question would remain: who would be the metagovernor? In chapter 2, we discussed how Sørensen summarised the metagovernance literature in three positions: stimulating self-

governance (hands-on), organisational networking (hands-off) or indirect governance (shadow of hierarchy). We argue that how WISEs have developed in the neocorporatist context of Flanders (a negotiation and exchange-based model), this sector has already developed a mix of all three approaches. Indeed, the hierarchical administrative and political framework is shaped through intense negotiations with peak associations. Organisational networking shapes how WISEs handle competition (albeit not across the entire Flemish region) but also how they exchange ideas, diffuse new management techniques and develop political strategies. Some of the core principles that were introduced in the current legislative framework were already formulated by the sector itself before formal negotiations started.

5 Living apart together?

A multi-method study of the relationship between local government and civil society organisations in Flanders

5.1 Introduction¹⁸

This chapter explores the relationship between CSOs and government at the local level in Flanders. The issue addressed in this chapter connects to the research presented in the third chapter that focused on CSOs on the Flemish regional level: what is the current state of the local governance arrangements in municipalities and cities in a region that is considered to be neocorporatist? In our third chapter, we concluded that at the regional level our research does not suggest a strong destabilisation of the neocorporatist institutions. Of course, in that chapter, we focused on CSOs at the Flemish regional level. In this chapter we turn to the local level, in which we specifically focus on organisations that are locally active, meaning that have a reach within their city or its immediate environment.

In this research, we build on Edward's study on civil society (Edwards, 2014) which views CSOs as combining different societal roles: they not only generate social capital but can also provide services and goods, influence public policy, strive for social change or generate political action and awareness. Many believe that traditional civil society is eroding (Bauman, 2000; Beck et al., 1994), and new types of initiatives are emerging that are often more informal and ad hoc (Brandsen et al., 2015). This change is part of a broader dynamic in society in which both the position of the government and civil society is changing, as argued by post-structuralist (Marinetto, 2003a) or post-traditional (Lee, 2006) theories: society has become structured without a centre (Esmark, 2009; Luhmann, 1997, 2013), power has become diffused throughout a wide array of actors and structures (Castells, 2010a), and traditional institutions have become unstable and fluid (Bauman, 2000; Beck et al., 2003, 1994). In this process, according to Castells, the local and regional governments have gained importance, being "the closest point of contact between the state and civil society" (Castells, 2010a: 334).

¹⁸ A draft of this chapter was presented at ARNOVA 2018: Pauly, R., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2018). *Living apart together? A mixed-method study on local governance in Flanders*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8601027>

Corresponding CSI Flanders spotlightpaper: Pauly, R., Suykens, B., & De Rynck, F. (2018). *Lokaal middenveld: instrument of partner van lokale overheden?* <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8573634>

Indeed, cities are often seen as a breeding ground for social innovations in both government and civil society (Brandsen, Cattacin, Evers, & Zimmer, 2016).

Two issues follow from these changes that are particularly important. First, it is often assumed that new types of CSOs are forming and operating more informal and flexible than the traditional CSOs (Brandsen et al., 2015). Second, new types of governance relationships are assumed to emerge that are replacing the traditional neocorporatist institutions. Local communities and cities are said to have gained importance (Castells, 2010a), whereby *local citizen initiatives* are often pointed at as the newest form of CSOs (Igalla, Edelenbos, & Van Meerkerk, 2019). Yet, little is known of how much of the traditional landscape has eroded, what the scale of the new initiatives are and what the impact of these changes is on the relationship with local government (Brandsen et al., 2015: 3; Igalla et al., 2019). These issues are especially salient for the relationship between government and civil society in a neocorporatist setting. As discussed in chapter 2, in neocorporatist countries (e.g., Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria), the key issue is that CSOs form an integral part of the political system. In chapter 3 we have also shown that at the Flemish regional level, this neocorporatist system is rather stable, despite the literature on the destabilising impact of NPM, although we also saw that new NPM-style elements are being introduced gradually in the existing institutional framework. The question then is whether the societal changes identified in our literature review (chapter 2), and summarised briefly above, have had an impact at the local level on the relationship between local government and CSOs.

This chapter provides a multi-method empirical exploration of the neocorporatist relationship between local governments and local CSOs. This exploration takes place in three parts: first, an empirical description of local civil society across different types of municipalities; second, a description of the institutional relationships between government and civil society; and lastly, a focus on smaller, non-metropolitan municipalities to identify whether new forms of CSOs are emerging in these municipalities and what (if any) the impact is on the relationship with local government. In order to provide answers to these issues, we constructed a mixed-method study that collects data from CSOs in 14 Flemish municipalities. As a first step, we constructed a database of 1757 CSOs. Secondly, we sent out a survey to all CSOs in our database (with a response of 413 CSOs). Thirdly, we organised focus groups in five non-urban municipalities.

We will first discuss the particular context of Belgium, including the issue of pillarisation and the debate on newly emerging citizen initiatives. Next, we present our methodology, followed by the measures used in our research and findings. We end this chapter with a discussion, in which we provide answers to our research questions, and the conclusion.

5.2 Local government and CSOs in Belgium (Flanders)

In chapter 1 we argued that Belgium is a particularly salient setting for research on the relationship between government and civil society in a country with a neocorporatist tradition. We will not repeat those same arguments here, but we refer to the discussion. We have also discussed that this neocorporatist structure was historically interwoven with Belgium's history of pillarisation: the tight coupling between CSOs, political parties and government representatives that is constructed around shared values or interests (Billiet, 2004; Huyse, 2003). This system had its heyday during the 1950s and 1960s with many local CSOs being part of larger pillar organisations. From the 1960s onwards, Belgium has experienced a process of depillarisation, and the neocorporatist system of institutionalised exchange has been expanded toward non-pillarised CSOs as well. During the 1960s and 1980s, so-called new social movements challenged the existing Belgian (and Flemish) pillarised structures (Hellemans, 1990). They aspired to set new social issues on the political agenda: women's rights, environmental challenges, third-world solidarity, equality and pacifism (Develtere, 2004; Hooghe & Billiet, 2004; Stouthuysen, 2004). Hooghe argues that these movements have gradually been integrated into the existing political system, setting a new agenda, creating more openness and bringing women into the political decision-making process (2004: 350). At the local level, the most prominent form of institutionalised exchange between government and CSOs are the so-called local advisory councils. Legislation by the Flemish government makes the formation of these councils mandatory for specific domains (spatial planning, culture, youth work, sports)¹⁹, and local governments are free to create others. These advisory councils deal with many different domains. Besides the four that were already mentioned, there are also councils on environmental issues, agricultural policies, local trade, childcare initiatives, education, international solidarity, senior citizens, and health and wellbeing, among others.

Recently, there has been a growing debate on the emergence of so-called new types of CSOs. This can be seen from the grey literature in Flanders produced by CSOs and others which discusses a range of CSOs that are active as local or urban commons (Bauwens & Onzia, 2017; De Rynck et al., 2016; Hautekeur, 2017; Holemans et al., 2018; Kuhk et al., 2018; Van Meerbeek, 2018), for which different names are used besides commons, such as citizen collectives, citizen initiatives or citizen action. CSOs discussed in these publications are mostly active in domains such as climate and sustainability, local sharing economy, social inclusion,

¹⁹ Since 2017, a separate advisory council for sports is no longer required. When a local government wants to abolish this council, they are required to integrate it into the cultural advisory council (creating an advisory council for leisure).

energy, food production or agriculture. While many of these publications succeed in shedding light on local initiatives that might otherwise remain unnoticed, we must also critically assess what this means for our research. Indeed, while they offer anecdotal evidence of new types of CSOs, there is very little systematic analysis across different cities and municipalities. Furthermore, many publications focus on larger urban environments but can only offer some indications of non-urban or rural environments.

5.3 Methodology²⁰

5.3.1 Mapping local civil society

Our research took place in three phases. In the first phase, we constructed a database of local CSOs in different municipalities. These municipalities represent the different local socio-economic contexts in Flanders. We categorised the municipalities according to an often-used socio-economic typology of Belgian municipalities (Belfius Bank NV, n.d.) as the basis for constructing four different clusters: rural municipalities, residential municipalities, semi-urban municipalities and cities. In order to make the construction of the database manageable, we randomly selected 14 municipalities from a total of 300 Flemish municipalities. Within each cluster, a fixed number of municipalities were randomly selected: two rural, three residential and five semi-urban municipalities and four cities. The full overview of municipalities and cities and their population numbers can be found in the appendix of this chapter. Considering their population size, the four largest cities were only partially mapped (about half of the population represented), which was compensated in the analysis by adding weights to our calculations.

We focused on organisations that aim to generate some form of social change, perform a political or civic role in their city or provide some form of community or public service. As such, our focus was mainly on the domains of wellbeing and welfare (e.g., elderly care, help for people with disabilities, organisations for underprivileged people), the local social economy (energy cooperatives, labour care initiatives, housing cooperatives,...) and so-called sociocultural organisations (social rights movements, ethnic-cultural associations, political organisations, youth work, faith-based organisations, ...). Consequently, organisations that focused primarily on recreation (leisure time, sports, arts, ...) were not included. The research was done by combining existing databases and canvassing in the local communities. In a first step, existing databases were used, such as the national database for associations (KBO-

²⁰ The data collection of this local research is the result of the joint efforts of the members of the CSI Flanders research consortium.

NACE), the database for sociocultural associations (SISCA), lists of members of local advisory councils, newspaper archives of regional editions of national newspapers, as well as databases of members from several umbrella organisations. Local administrators were contacted and asked to provide lists of local organisations in the many advisory committees established in Flemish municipalities. For each organisation, researchers checked whether they were still active in some form of online presence (website, social media account, up-to-date contact details, ...). After this phase, researchers contacted local residents with an active knowledge of local civil society. Every researcher contacted local administrators, chairpersons of local advisory boards and community workers, where possible. These contacts were then asked to evaluate our existing list of local initiatives and asked about other initiatives or other useful contacts. Given our interest in new forms of civil society, these local contacts were also used to look for organisations that could be seen as new CSOs: initiated and organised by citizens, in which citizens fully participate and that strive for some form of social change. The result is a database of 1757 organisations, which represents a weighted size of 2581 CSOs. Table 16 provides an overview per municipal cluster (in the appendix to this chapter a full list of all included cities is provided).

5.3.2 Survey research

In the second phase of our research, we sent out invitations for an online survey: of the 1792 organisations, 1660 had available contact details. These 1660 organisations were invited to take part in the survey, reaching a response rate of 24.9% (413 CSOs). When we did not have an email address, we sent out invitation letters (121 organisations) or invitations via their social media accounts or website forms (54 organisations). In our invitation, we asked for a person with a leading or managerial function of the organisation to fill in the survey, although we cannot confirm the position of the actual respondent. Invitations were sent out in November 2017, reminders at the start and end of December, and the final results were collected in February 2018. We used a chi-square test to assess whether there is a bias according to the distribution of the number of CSOs across municipalities in the survey response in relation to the population. We did not find a significant bias (χ^2 12.667, $df=13$, $p=.474$) using the unweighted data. We categorised the organisations according to their main field of activity and found that youth organisations, ethnic-cultural organisations and faith-based organisations are underrepresented (χ^2 66.1, $df=13$, $p<.001$). Sociocultural organisations for senior citizens and adults are overrepresented, so are neighbourhood associations, environmental organisations, poverty-relief organisations and organisations that are active for global solidarity. Because of this thematic bias and because we only mapped part of the larger cities,

a weighting correction was made for survey analysis. Table 16 below shows the number of organisations per cluster.

Overall, our mapping and survey cannot be representative of the entire local civil society in Flanders. Our mapping (14 out of 300 municipalities) is too limited to achieve this. However, our research does present the first overview of local CSOs across a wide range of municipalities and domains in Flanders. Thus, while we do not claim to generalise for the whole of the local civil society in Flanders, we are confident that the trends established in our research are sufficiently robust to contribute to the academic literature on local civil society.

Table 16: Number of CSOs per municipal cluster

	POPULATION				SURVEY			
	Raw data		Weighted data		Raw data		Weighted data	
Category	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Rural	87	4.95%	87	3.37%	29	7.02%	13	3.15%
Residential	171	9.73%	171	6.63%	37	8.95%	27	6.54%
Semi-urban	497	28.29%	497	19.26%	122	29.54%	81	19.61%
Cities	1002	57.03%	1826	70.75%	225	54.48%	292	70.70%
<i>Total</i>	<i>1757</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>2581</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>413</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>413</i>	<i>1000%</i>

5.3.3 Focus groups in non-urban environments

In a third phase, focus groups in five municipalities were used to provide more insight into the dynamics of local civil society. This was especially driven by a debate with representatives of Flemish umbrella organisations during early presentations on our research project, who argued that in smaller and non-metropolitan municipalities, new types of CSOs were emerging. We randomly selected five municipalities in each of the non-urban clusters in our population: the rural (1 of 2), residential (1 of 3) and semi-urban (3 of 5). Our focus group design sought to bring in perspectives from within local CSOs as well as local governments. Thus, we set up two focus groups in each municipality: one with representatives of CSOs and one with local administrators and elected officials (mayors, aldermen). The CSO groups were constructed using our database. We purposely selected CSOs from different types or domains. For the government groups, we contacted the mayor and a local administrator and asked them to help select the appropriate aldermen and administrators. Table 17 provides an overview of the number of participants in each focus group.

Table 17: Overview of focus groups in five municipalities

Town	GOOIK	NEVELE	BORNEM	DIEST	HEUSDEN-ZOLDER
Cluster	rural	residential	semi-urban		
Number of CSOs mapped	52	54	74	118	129
Focus group participants (number of persons)					
Local CSO	8	8	11	8	10
Local Government	2	4	5	2	4
Heterogeneity of focus groups (local CSOs)					
Number of participants per type of organisation					
Pillarised	2	6	4	7	6
- pillarised CSO for women			2	2	
- pillarised CSO for elderly		2	2	2	2
- pillarised CSO for youth		1			1
- Other pillarised	2	3		3	3
Environment & Mobility	3	1	2		
Health & Sickness			2		2
International Solidarity	2				
Other	1	1	3	1	2

A key issue in designing focus groups is to ensure social homogeneity within the group while maintaining sufficient heterogeneity between the participants to discuss the issue at hand (Duchesne et al., 2013; Myers, 1998). The social homogeneity of the group was ensured by taking into account three criteria: all members are active volunteers in local civil society, they take up key roles within their CSO (president, secretary, core volunteer), and they are active in smaller non-metropolitan municipalities. We opted to prioritise the fact that these participants took up these key roles in their organisation over their individual characteristics, such as age, gender or education. To ensure sufficient heterogeneity among the participants, we selected individuals from different types of organisations (as shown in Table 17). Each group was designed to have individuals from pillarised organisations, ad-hoc action groups (when available), environmental organisations and others. We sent out invitations to 15 organisations per municipality. In one case (Diest), most of the participants that responded came from the pillarised organisations.

5.4 Measures

In our population database we included some variables to identify organisations by their field of activity and target groups. For the survey we constructed several variables that measured how representatives of the local CSOs evaluate some of the key components of their organisation and their relationship with the government. Firstly, we measured how the respondents perceived the roles of their CSOs in society. Secondly, we asked respondents about their CSO's relationship with the government, which included the level of local funding, an assessment of governmental monitoring, the amount of personal contact with local government and the degree to which local governments can be considered partners. The focus groups were then used to discuss some of the results from our database and survey analysis. We focused on: pillarisation, interaction with local government and new forms or activities of CSOs.

5.4.1 Fields of activity, target groups and ideological affiliation

We categorised CSOs in different ways, using a combination of desktop research and survey items. When organisations were included in the population database, researchers assigned different codes according to three criteria. These criteria were identified through online desktop research. Firstly, does the organisation have a specific target group (youth, women, senior citizens, ethnic-cultural groups, people in need of care)? Secondly, is the organisation active in a particular field of activity (e.g., environment, mobility, poverty, sickness and health)? Thirdly, we identified whether the organisation was part of the traditional pillars (catholic, socialist, liberal) or other ideological organisations (Flemish nationalist, others). Lastly, we categorised whether the CSO was a religious or spiritual organisation (including houses of faith). Organisations can be included in different categories, but only in one subgroup per category.

5.4.2 Roles and types of CSOs

In order to assess the claim that CSOs might be under pressure to become less multi-purposeful (Bode, 2011) we measured which societal roles CSOs take up. In this article, we focus on roles that were important for our research question considering our empirical selection of CSO sectors: social capital, political advocacy and service delivery. We presented a list of 17 items to respondents, which they could score from 1 to 5. We used factor analysis on this set of items, which resulted in three meaningful factors, and for each role, a reliable mean scale was constructed (see the appendix at the end of the chapter for a list of items and factor loadings). Furthermore, we asked respondents to describe their own organisations

according to a list of several types, which they could score from 1 (totally not) to 5 (very much). Here we measured to what extent respondents viewed their own CSO, among others, as being a citizen initiative, an enterprise or an organisation that historically belongs to a pillar.

5.4.3 Governmental funding, monitoring and partnership

In a neocorporatist context, CSOs are supported by considerable public funding. To assess to what extent this is true as well for local governments, we asked respondents what percentage of the CSO's income came from public funding. We offered different response categories: 0%, 1–4%, 5–19%, 20–39%, 40–59%, 60–79%, 80–94%, 95–100%. We also asked to what extent the respondents felt that their organisation was monitored by the local government, using four different items, each measured using a five-point scale: The local government '...monitors your activities', '...monitors whether your finances are in order', '...monitors the performance of your organisation', and '...asks about your social impact'. Given the importance of the local advisory councils as part of the institutionalised exchange between government and CSOs, we asked respondents whether their CSOs participated in these councils (during the previous two years) using a five-point scale (not, once, several times, often, very often). Respondents were also asked to indicate how often they had personal contacts with local administrators or politicians (in function of their CSO), again using the same five-point scale (not, ..., very often). Furthermore, we asked to what extent respondents considered the local government to be 'a partner with whom you collaborate substantively'.

5.4.4 Focus groups: pillarisation, interacting with government, new CSOs

In each of the five selected municipalities, we first organised a focus group with representatives of local CSOs. The focus groups with local government officials were organised afterwards and used to discuss the same topics but also our findings from the discussions with local CSOs. The CSO groups were divided into two parts. In the first part, the representatives introduced their organisation and their main activities, whereby all participants spoke in turns. In the second part, we introduced three topics to discuss, each accompanied by some results from our quantitative research: pillarisation, the issue of partnerships with local government (and the wider interaction with local government) and our findings concerning new CSOs or new initiatives. We discussed each topic by starting with a statement. Concerning pillarisation, the statement was: "We found that civil society in your town still has many of the 'traditional' pillarised organisations. Is this finding correct? Does it concern 'pillarisation in name' but not in practice?" This statement was preceded by the percentage of pillarised CSOs in the municipality. Concerning the interaction with local government, the statement was: "For many local CSOs local government is a partner with whom they

collaborate substantively. Does this count for you as well? What does 'collaboration' mean?" We then used this topic to discuss the broader meaning of interaction with local government, including the role of the local advisory councils. Concerning the new forms of CSOs, the statement was: "We found only a few examples of innovation in your municipality. By innovation we mean new organisations or new activities within an existing organisation." This statement was accompanied by illustrations of new organisations (local commons, local sharing economy, action groups) and new types of activities in existing organisations (traditional nature-preservation organisations organising local sharing initiatives).

5.5 Findings

Table 18 below presents the most important descriptive results from our database and survey. All results are calculated with a weighted correction, as discussed earlier. Below we will discuss these findings, together with the findings from our focus groups.

Table 18: Overview of descriptive findings from local database and survey

		Municipal clusters				<i>n</i>
Target groups of CSOs	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	2581
Youth	17.5%	20.7%	15.2%	12.7%	18.9%	
Senior citizens	6.0%	12.6%	11.7%	7.6%	4.7%	
Women	6.0%	8.0%	11.7%	11.5%	3.9%	
Ethnic-cultural organisations	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	6.7%	
LGBTQ	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	
Field of activity	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	2581
Neighbourhood or city-focused	15.1%	1.1%	4.1%	8.5%	18.7%	
Sickness and health	10.4%	16.1%	13.5%	11.1%	9.6%	
Houses of faith	10.3%	5.7%	5.8%	11.1%	10.7%	
International solidarity	8.4%	9.2%	9.4%	5.6%	9.0%	
Social inclusion and poverty	8.0%	2.3%	0.6%	3.6%	10.2%	
Sociocultural formation and education	7.7%	16.1%	16.4%	14.1%	4.7%	
Environment and mobility	6.1%	9.2%	4.1%	5.8%	6.2%	
Other social activities	6.5%	3.4%	5.3%	6.4%	6.7%	
Religious or philosophical orgs.	5.2%	1.1%	7.0%	3.2%	5.7%	
Professions and economy	3.5%	1.1%	4.1%	4.0%	3.5%	
Political action or movement (others)	2.3%	0.0%	2.9%	1.8%	2.5%	
Roles of CSOs (mean scores, 1–5)	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	<i>n</i>
Social capital	3.71	3.50	4.00	3.79	3.67	413
Service delivery	2.84	2.38	2.65	2.81	2.89	413
Political advocacy	2.57	2.50	2.43	2.44	2.63	413
Pillarised CSOs in population	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	2581
No	72%	39%	45%	53%	82%	
Yes	28%	61%	55%	47%	18%	
Pillarised CSOs: Survey self-assessment	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	413
Not at all	52%	31%	32%	38%	59%	
A little	7%	15%	4%	11%	5%	
Somewhat	12%	8%	25%	7%	13%	
Quite a lot	7%	15%	18%	10%	4%	
Very much	17%	23%	11%	24%	16%	
<i>Don't know</i>	5%	8%	11%	10%	3%	
Proportion of income from local government	All	Non-metropolitan municipalities		Cities	269	
None	20.10%	10.80%		24.20%		
Low (<40%)	51.70%	72.30%		42.50%		
About half (40–59%)	8.20%	7.80%		9.70%		
Large (>60%)	20.10%	12.00%		23.70%		

		Municipal clusters				<i>n</i>
Governmental monitoring (mean scores, 1–5)	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	
govt. monitors your activities	2.42	1.92	1.75	2.51	2.48	395
govt. monitors whether your finances are in order	2.41	1.27	1.68	2.13	2.59	393
govt. monitors performance of your organisation	2.60	2.03	2.06	2.55	2.69	397
govt. asks about your social impact	2.72	2.32	2.57	2.36	2.86	397
Government as partner (mean scores, 1–5)	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	
govt. is a partner (collaborates substantively)	3.03	2.58	2.78	2.90	3.10	398
Organisational autonomy (mean scores, 1–5)	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	
govt. does not intervene substantively	3.69	3.83	3.28	3.66	3.72	400
govt. leaves CSO to pursue its goals autonomously	4.30	4.50	4.45	4.26	4.29	395
Local Advisory Councils	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	
<i>% of CSOs that are members of a local council</i>	81.80%	92.30%	88.90%	87.70%	79.10%	413
<i>Attendance of confirmed members</i>	All	Non-metropolitan municipalities			Cities	<i>338</i>
Not or only once	24.9%	21.5%			26.4%	
Several times	31.7%	39.3%			28.1%	
(very) often	32.3%	29.9%			33.3%	
don't know	11.2%	9.3%			12.1%	
Personal contacts (administrators/politicians) (since 2015)	All	Non-metropolitan municipalities			Cities	<i>364</i>
Never	15.40%	17.80%			14.40%	
Once / several times	50.00%	46.70%			51.40%	
(very) often	34.60%	35.50%			34.20%	
Citizen initiative	All	Rural	Residential	Semi-urban	Cities	<i>2581</i>
<i>% of CSOs categorised as such</i>	9.9%	6.9%	0.6%	7.4%	11.6%	
<i>Self-reported assessment</i>	All	Non-metropolitan municipalities			Cities	<i>413</i>
Not at all	37.3%	34.2%			38.6%	
A little	17.2%	19.2%			16.4%	
Somewhat	12.6%	15.8%			11.3%	
Quite a lot	9.7%	10.0%			9.6%	
Very much	16.9%	12.5%			18.8%	
<i>Don't know</i>	6.3%	8.3%			5.5%	

5.5.1 Field of activity and target groups

In the total population, the density of CSOs per 1000 inhabitants is larger for rural (avg. 4.4) and semi-urban municipalities (4.3) compared to residential municipalities (3.3) and the four larger cities (2.8). While cities thus seem to have fewer organisations per 1000 inhabitants than other clusters in our population database, we find that the diversity of CSOs in cities in terms of field of activity and target groups is larger, as can be seen in Table 18. A large majority of these local CSOs are part of a larger umbrella organisation (62.0%). In general, we see that most CSOs (>10%) are youth organisations (17.5%), organisations focused on their neighbourhood, village or city (15.1%), sickness and health organisations (10.4%) and houses of faith (10.4%). The least represented (<5%) are professional associations (3.5%), associations focused on political activities (2.3%) and LGBTQ associations (0.06%). By combining the non-metropolitan clusters into one category, we were able to correlate both fields of activity (0/1) and target groups (0/1) with this new variable (binary municipal type: city/non-city). We found some significant differences, although the correlations were all very weak, as can be seen from Table 19 below.

Table 19: Correlation between activity and target groups with municipal type

Variables	City ^a
1 Sociocultural formation and education	-.173**
2 Neighbourhood or city-focused	.153**
3 Poverty and social integration	.124**
4 Ethnic-cultural organisations	.105**
5 Senior citizens	-.084**
6 Youth	.057**

^a Municipal type (city = 1, non-city = 0),
 ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
 n=2581

5.5.2 Multifunctional and post-pillarised?

There are three roles of CSOs that can be distinguished from our survey results: social capital, service delivery and political advocacy (factor loadings and reliability can be found in the appendix of the chapter). We calculated mean scales (ranging from 1 to 5) for each of these roles. Overall, social capital receives the highest score (3.71), followed by service delivery (2.84) and political advocacy (2.60). We see this trend occurring in every cluster, as presented in Table 20. These roles seem to be consistent across the set of municipalities: even when clustering the municipalities in two groups (cities and non-metropolitan municipalities), no

significant differences between the two groups are found. We find that the more organisations are oriented towards one goal, the more they are oriented towards the other two roles, as can be seen in Table 20. This indicates that, at least in the perception of our respondents, these local CSOs combine different roles.

Table 20: Correlation between roles of CSOs

Variables ^a		1	2	3
1	Social capital	-		
2	Political advocacy	.276**	-	
3	Service delivery	.311**	.368**	-

^a All variables are mean scales ranging from 1 to 5
**** Spearman correlations, $p < .01$**
n=419 (>413 because of weighted correction)

We also measured to what extent certain roles were more associated with particular types of CSOs. In Table 21 we provide Spearman correlations for each of the roles with the fields of activity and target groups of the CSOs in our survey. First of all, we see that the organisations whose primary target groups are youth, senior citizens and women are negatively correlated with service delivery. And for youth organisations, this is also the case for political advocacy. Next, we see that ethnic-cultural associations report higher positive correlations with all three roles. The same for organisations on social inclusion, although the relations with service delivery is stronger. Other organisations that are positively correlated with political advocacy are political associations and professional associations. Surprisingly, neighbourhood associations are not more positively correlated with social capital. However, it must be emphasised that all correlations are (very) weak.

In order to assess to what extent pillarised organisations still make up local civil society, we use both the assessment of the researchers (in constructing the database) and the self-assessment by the respondents in the survey. The results can be found in Table 18. In total, 28% of all CSOs can be considered part of the traditional pillars (catholic, socialist, liberal). Respondents in the survey report a higher number: 43% consider themselves to some degree part of a traditional pillar (all answers that are not 'not at all' or 'don't know'). This percentage is much higher for non-metropolitan municipalities than for semi-urban municipalities and cities. The percentages range from 61% in rural municipalities (61% self-reported) to 47% in semi-urban municipalities (52% self-reported). In the larger cities, the number drops rapidly: 18% are pillarised (although still 38% self-reported). This difference is statistically significant, with a moderate effect size: using a binary variable for municipal types (non-metropolitan vs.

city), we find that cities are negatively correlated with the presence of pillarised organisations ($r=-.326, p<.01$).

Table 21: Correlation between roles of CSOs and field of activity

Variables ^b		Social Capital ^a	Service Delivery ^a	Political Advocacy ^a
1	Youth	.031	-.126**	-.149**
2	Senior citizens	-.034	-.096*	-.038
3	Women	.012	-.175**	-.079
4	Ethnic-cultural organisations	.172**	.117*	.167**
5	Neighbourhood or city-focused	-.066	-.030	.020
6	Sickness and health	-.046	.138**	-.045
7	Houses of faith	.060	.027	-.102*
8	International solidarity	-.175**	.031	.122*
9	Social inclusion and poverty	.097*	.215**	.099*
10	Sociocultural formation and education	.038	-.02	.041
11	Environment and mobility	-.076	.022	.077
12	Other social activities	.057	.070	-.035
13	Religious or philosophical orgs.	.135**	.091	-.036
14	Professions and economy	-.077	.061	.116*
15	Political action or movement (others)	-.072	-.090	.196**

^a All variables are mean scales ranging from 1 to 5
^b All types of activity and target groups are binary variables (1/0)
**** Spearman correlations, $p<.01$**
*** Spearman correlations, $p<.05$**
n=419 (>413 because of weighted correction)

The question remains how we should interpret these numbers. Do these numbers mean that in smaller and semi-urban municipalities, pillars still form the bedrock of civil society and as such an institutional connection between local government and civil society? Historically, pillars indeed formed a structural connection between individuals, organisations, political parties and the government. However, from our focus groups, we learn clearly that the numbers in our survey should not be interpreted that way. This structural dimension of pillarisation seems to be largely absent from the daily practices in local communities, although some effects remain. In our focus groups, almost all participants agreed that pillarisation does not determine the life choices for their members even though the organisations might in name still be recognisable as part of a pillar. As one participant expressed her view: “Oh, but that has nothing to do with it anymore!” Other participants in different groups expressed similar

views: “Pillarisation is over, all types of people come, it has nothing to do with the C [Christian] or Christian merchants”; “Half of our members are not socialist. They are even members of the CM [Christian mutual fund]. We are open for others”; “There are many participants of a different ‘ideological background’. People make choices now, regardless of pillars, they shop. That ‘stamp’ has passed”; “Pillarisation? No, we have people that are members of the ABVV [socialist union]. Which is good, because it results in discussion, and offers dynamics.” However, the discussion on the impact of pillars can still stir up discussion among some older members in the focus groups. In one municipality, we had several members of older age who remember their town as defined by pillarisation: “[the town] was run by the pillars. Now there is more cooperation. It used to be the case that if one got one thing, the other should get the same. With our members, that is still part of their thinking.” In reaction to this, others who are also part of local pillarised CSOs stated that this is really just the case for the eldest members.

With regard to the connection between pillarised CSOs and political parties, even though most participants seem to think it is mostly gone, some doubts remain over some remaining effects. In the focus group in the smallest municipality, one member doubted that pillars have lost their local power. This town has the largest share of pillarised organisations in our database (63.5% of all CSOs, of which all but one are from the catholic pillar). Himself a member of the catholic pillar, he expressed his doubts over the loss of influence of local pillarised political connections, as he wondered why members of the local parish were part of a specific local advisory council. Still, besides this participant and the earlier-mentioned older participants in another group, there was a general feeling that pillars no longer enjoyed a privileged relationship with local governments. Our survey reflects this as well. We measured the frequency of direct personal contact with local administrators and politicians and found no significant correlation between pillars and the frequency of personal access.

These organisations are then no longer pillars in the traditional sense. Our population database also shows that they are significantly more active for specific target groups: women ($r=.237$, $p<.01$), youth ($r=.120$, $p<.01$) and the elderly ($r=.166$, $p<.01$). They are significantly less active for ethnic-cultural organisations ($r=-.132$, $p<.01$) and in the domain of social integration and poverty reduction ($r=-.171$, $p<.01$), local neighbourhood organisations ($r=-.251$, $p<.01$) and environment and mobility ($r=-.134$, $p<.01$). Although these correlations are weak, they show a tendency of these organisations to be active in more traditional domains and less active in domains that deal with so-called contemporary wicked issues (climate, mobility, poverty, migration). There are signs that some of the Flemish pillarised umbrella organisations are trying to renew themselves. One Flemish organisation, once a traditional Christian women’s movement that has many local groups, has initiated an internal

organisational reform as well as a public debate concerning work-life balance (Wouters & Oosterlynck, 2019). However, whether this centrally initiated reform translates to the local level remains to be seen. In two of our focus groups, members of this organisation were present, and they indicated that several members of the local groups did not feel connected to these national initiatives: “Our board member goes to the meetings [on the Flemish level], but this is not really picked up locally.” Another member expressed that she felt a generational disconnect between the professionals of the regional organisation and its local organisations: “One time, we received a visit of two young ladies of which we could be grandmothers.” Their local group is mostly occupied with organising leisurely activities like flower arranging and cooking demonstrations. Moreover, when in the same town another local group of the same organisations was started by new younger members, she did not feel the need to engage with them: “Those are younger people, but we don’t hear from them (...) They think we’re just old grannies... but, of course, we are!”

5.5.3 Governmental funding, monitoring and partnerships

As shown in the table with our main quantitative findings (Table 18), 71.8% of respondents report that their organisation receives less than 40% of its income from local government. About 8% of organisations receive between 40% and 59% of their income from local government, and about one in five (20.1%) receive over 60% of their income from local government funding. We find that in the larger cities the proportion of CSOs that do not receive any local funding is significantly higher, although interestingly, in cities, the proportion of organisations that receive the most funding from local government is also higher. A chi-square test shows that these differences between the two types of municipalities (non-metropolitan and cities) are statistically significant ($X^2[3, N=269]=20.477, p<.000$), although the effect size is rather low (Cramer’s $V=.276$). Indeed, even with these differences, the general view remains: both in cities and non-metropolitan municipalities most respondents report that less than 40% of their income comes from local government funding.

We do find that higher public funding comes with more governmental monitoring: we find a moderately strong positive correlation between higher levels of government income and the degree of governmental monitoring (of their activities) reported by the respondent ($r_s=0.417, p<.01$). However, given the generally low level of local government funding for CSOs, it is not unexpected that most respondents (60.7%) report that there is no governmental monitoring of their activities, while 27.2% report some level of governmental monitoring, and 12.1% indicate an ‘in between’ level of monitoring. When looking at the more specific types of monitoring (finances, performance, social impact), the same overall view appears, as can be seen in

Table 18. CSOs that are more oriented towards service delivery appear to experience more monitoring of their activities by the local government, although this correlation is very weak ($r=.102$, $p<.05$). Furthermore, local CSOs consider themselves autonomous in their relationship with local government (confirmed by 81.7%), although almost one quarter (23.5%) report that local government intervenes with their activities at least to some degree (63.3% do not believe this to be applicable for them; 13.1% report it to be 'in between'). We also looked at the extent to which respondents perceive local government to be a partner. With a mean score of 3.03 (meaning 'in between' on a scale from 1 to 5), the issue seems unclear. Looking at the numbers in more detail, we find that 40.3% of participants agree with this statement, and a group of almost equal size (36.8%) states the exact opposite (the remaining 23.0% pointing to the middle of the scale: 'in between').

While we found that pillarised structures do no longer structure the institutionalised exchange between local government and civil society, other forms of exchange are also important. We looked at the local advisory councils and the extent of personal contacts with local politicians and administrators. Most of the respondents report that their organisation is a member of one of the local advisory councils (81.8%), as can be seen from Table 18. In cities, this proportion of CSOs is somewhat lower (79.1%) compared to the non-urban municipalities (88.4%), but the percentage is still high and the correlation is rather weak ($r=-.112$, $p<.05$). While local CSOs are in general members of these advisory councils, this does not automatically ensure participation in the actual gatherings. Indeed, as shown in Table 18, we see that, from those who are members, about one in four CSOs (24.9%) have not or only once attended a council gathering in the two years before filling out the survey, while 31.7% reportedly attended several times, and about a third (32.3%) participated often or very often. One in ten (11.2%) are not sure about their participation. Concerning this degree of participation, we found no significant differences between municipal clusters or between types of organisations (field of activity, target groups). Looking at personal contacts with local politicians or administrators, we found that 34.6% report having had contact often or very often, and half of all respondents (50.0%) reported having had contact once or several times, while 15.4% of respondents reported having had no contact. We found no significant difference between types of municipalities.

In the focus groups, we looked deeper into this relationship with the government, discussing what interaction with local government entails. First of all, when asked about what local government could mean for them, respondents mostly answered in practical terms. The main concern was the availability of infrastructure for meetings and activities. Local governments usually provide some form of infrastructure through cultural or community centres. Here,

concerns were practical in nature: the rent or prices for food and drinks might be too high, or the type of infrastructure did not suit their needs.

The topic of local advisory councils provided a wide variety of experiences. As described earlier, these advisory councils have been installed following central legislation, and cover a wide range of domains. Most of the organisations in our focus groups participated in the culture councils, and participation seemed to be motivated by practical concerns: participation gives CSOs access to some limited financial compensation and technical support by the local government for organising activities. Not all committees suffer from the same passive reception. In one town, several CSOs were able to use the local council for international solidarity to establish an interorganisational dynamic between them. A driving factor here seems to be that one person was able to mobilise her familial and personal network in setting up activities and gathering funds. In another town, the committee on environmental regulation is a space for political debate. This became clear in our focus groups because two members were present, both on somewhat opposite sides of the political debate: one member of an environmental organisation (that manages local nature reserves) and one member of a local organisation of farmers. In the focus groups with local government officials, these findings are confirmed, yet also qualified. In two municipalities, officials voiced the concern that the political or policy aspirations of most CSOs are rather limited: not everyone who comes to the local councils is actively pursuing political or policy work. In another municipality, officials also pointed out that local governments have gathered more professional knowledge and experience over the years, which might impact the way they work with the input from these advisory councils. Still, some officials also recognise that local government could take a more active role here. This takes time and effort, and one official points out that this also requires working with administrators that have the capabilities to manage such a policy process in these councils. One mayor recognised the need for local government to improve its efforts navigating complex issues: “As local government, we have to take the initiative to put mobility on the agenda and to create dialogue and support. But that takes time and effort. And sometimes a complex issue like mobility becomes reduced to a small symbolic component like parking tickets.”

In almost all of our focus groups, cooperation with, or support from, local governments was framed in terms of practical support or (often limited) institutionalised policy advice. We found little evidence in these non-metropolitan municipalities of active political or policy cooperation between civil society and local government. In two focus groups, we found CSOs with more active interaction with local government. These examples are project-based, such as a project on organising local low traffic roads and one project in which local heritage archives were

made digitally accessible. Thus, when our survey results show that a large group of CSOs (40.3%) report that local government is a substantial partner, our focus groups translate this in far less encompassing terms than the survey item suggests.

5.5.4 Innovation: citizen initiatives and new ways of doing things?

Innovation in civil society is often linked to the motivation of citizens for dealing with wicked issues, often in response to government or market failure (Salamon & Toepler, 2015). We look at innovation from the perspective of new types of organisations or activities that follow from this social innovation, e.g., the emergence of ad-hoc groups or informal local initiatives, whereby cities are usually seen as fruitful breeding grounds of innovation (Brandsen et al., 2015). In our classification of fields of activity of CSOs, we found little evidence that cities are significantly different from other municipalities. Our database also contains an indicator of whether these organisations can be considered citizen initiatives (in Dutch: *burgerinitiatief*). This particular term is often used to describe new types of organisation, and its connotation points to some degree of social innovation (Holemans et al., 2018; Hurenkamp, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2006). In our research group we used the definition of 'citizen initiatives' as proposed in a research report by Flemish researchers Holemans and Noy (2016): (1) it's a collective structure set for the long-term (thus excluding one-time projects), (2) it is initiated by citizens, not by other existing CSOs, local governments or enterprises, (3) citizens have control of the organisations (thus it's not government that controls the strategic decisions), (4) citizens are actively involved in the production of the services, goods or activities of the collective (thus excluding organisations that in which most citizens are mostly passive consumers). We also asked the respondents in the survey to indicate to what extent their organisation could be considered a citizen initiative. However, we did not provide a definition to the respondents. The term was part of a list of 15 types (including other types like enterprise, historical pillar or interest group).

Based on our definition, we identified 9.9% of CSOs in our population as a citizen initiative (weighted observations) as shown in Table 18. Cities have a higher percentage of these types of CSOs (11.6%) compared to the non-metropolitan municipalities (5.8%), but the statistical difference is very small ($r=.088$, $p<.01$). The self-reporting by respondents in the survey results in a much higher percentage. If we consider the responses from 'somewhat' to 'very much', 39.2% of respondents perceive their CSO to be a citizen initiative. Respondents that seem absolutely positive ('very much') make up 16.9%. When we look more closely at that top 16.9% of CSOs, we find that 35.9% of these CSOs are part of larger Flemish organisations, even some members of the traditionally pillarised organisations. This list also includes more

traditional nature organisations, traditional youth or elderly associations, local welfare associations and a social work organisation. By combining the three highest responses on the response scale, we constructed a binary variable (citizen initiative = 1), which we used to test for correlations with types of activity and target groups. This resulted in some low positive correlations: neighbourhood- and city-oriented CSOs ($r=.218$, $p<.01$), youth organisations ($r=.133$, $p<.01$), environment and mobility ($r=.163$, $p<.01$) and equally low negative correlations: sickness and health ($r=-.142$, $p<.01$) and pillarised CSOs ($r=-.154$, $p<.01$).

These results show that a large part of respondents seems to recognise their organisations in this new term, while our classification of citizen initiatives as researchers was much lower. In our focus groups, we discussed the presence of new organisations or activities and asked the participants whether they found our assessment on the low number of new types of organisations or lower levels of activity on certain social issues (climate, mobility, poverty) correct. These discussions did not result in finding activities that remained under the radar of our research. All of the new organisations mentioned in the focus groups were already listed in our database. It was interesting to see why respondents referred to some initiatives as new forms of CSOs. In one group, a local member of a Flemish environmental organisation did not realise that the relatively recent car-sharing initiative (organised by his own umbrella organisations) could be seen as an example of such a new initiative by an existing CSO. Overall, the discussion on what 'new' or 'innovation' meant was the most difficult part of the focus groups. It usually started with silence, followed by some hesitant responses. Mostly, in each focus group, we found some minor indications of new activities in existing CSOs, such as the aforementioned digitisation project by a local heritage group as well as the car-sharing initiative (both active in Gooik). In this group, participants also mentioned a local cooperative promoting sustainable energy production. In one group (Diest), participants particularly liked a newly established organisation that creates leisure activities in creative ways but found it hard to find other forms of innovation—the only organisation mentioned was a small community-supported agriculture farm. In Heusden-Zolder, the participants especially liked a local initiative in which arts were combined with some form of formation or education, including a 'cheerful centre for language activation and arts education'. They also referred to a group of parents organising after-school activities for their children as a form of innovation. In Nevele, a local youth organisation worked actively with children and youth with disabilities, which participants say is considered to be a leading example for others by their Flemish umbrella organisation.

These examples from the focus groups show the wide range of organisations that were considered to be innovating in some way. We organised these focus groups to investigate the

claims that new types of initiatives were emerging not only in larger urban areas but also in non-metropolitan municipalities. Yet, in general, these five focus groups provided little indication of this. Besides these few examples, the most common reaction from our participants was that it is unclear what innovation means. When talking about some new organisations, it is also not always clear whether participants were talking about 'new' in the sense of CSOs that were only recently established, CSOs that were working in different or new ways (e.g., more ad-hoc, informal, flexible, etc.) or CSOs that were engaging with complex social issues (so-called wicked issues). At times it was even unclear for some whether some initiative that was being discussed was organised by the local government or by a local association.

5.6 Discussion

This chapter set out to empirically explore the relationship between local governments and local CSOs in a neocorporatist setting. We set out to answer three research questions: (1) what type of CSOs make up local civil society across different types of municipalities; (2) what are the institutional relationships between civil society and local government; and (3) what (if any) is the impact of new forms of CSOs on the relationship between government and civil society in smaller municipalities?

5.6.1 Contribution and limitations

The empirical contribution of this chapter is the combination of a large database of CSOs across 14 municipalities, followed by a large online survey of 413 organisations and an in-depth exploration of key issues in focus groups in five municipalities. This provides us with a rich dataset of local CSOs across various fields of activities in various settings, from rural municipalities to the largest Flemish cities. Our research has some important limitations. Firstly, we sampled 14 of the 300 municipalities in Flanders, which means that we cannot state that our research can be generalised for the whole of the local civil society in Flanders. Furthermore, we opted to include a diverse set of municipalities, which means that we have included 4 of the 13 largest cities in Flanders, while only including 10 of the 287 non-metropolitan municipalities. However, given the variety of CSOs and municipalities, we are confident that our findings provide a robust set of data to explore the key issues identified in this chapter. While not representative for the whole of Flanders, within our sample framework we can identify key trends and differences that are important to the discussion on local civil society and local governance. Secondly, our survey data are self-reported and originate from one source (a leading individual of the CSO). This means that the perspectives expressed in

our survey might be limited since they do not include the perspectives of other important members of CSOs (other volunteers or professionals). We must be careful not to treat these perceptions as objective measurements—while they provide useful insights, they cannot express what is going on in practice. Thirdly, we used focus groups to gain more insight into our quantitative findings. The findings from these focus groups results must not be taken as being representative of CSOs, but they serve to illustrate the various interpretations of the general trends identified in our quantitative research.

5.6.2 A post-pillarised landscape

Concerning the first research question, our mapping reveals a wide variety of organisations within an already selective sample strategy (excluding leisure, sports and arts) in a limited set of municipalities and cities (14 out of 300). On the whole, urban areas have a larger diversity in types of organisation, although with a lower density of organisation (CSOs per 1000 inhabitants). We find that respondents perceive their organisation to be mostly oriented towards social capital, and to a lesser extent towards service delivery and political advocacy, although each of the roles we identified is at least to some degree confirmed. These roles are consistent across municipalities: no significant differences between cities and non-metropolitan municipalities are found in our dataset. Thus, judging from the perceptions of our respondents, local civil society is primarily focused on social capital, whereby the positive correlations with the other roles suggest that the more one role is considered important, the more the other roles are as well. Local civil society thus seems to be multi-purposeful (Bode, 2011): they see themselves as combining different societal roles. When looking at the different types of activities, we find that only two types of organisations are positively correlated with all three roles: ethnic-cultural organisations and organisations working on social integration and poverty alleviation. We hypothesise that one of the reasons is that their specific members experience higher needs in all three societal roles.

We also see that the landscape of local civil society outside of the larger cities in Flanders is still very much dominated by pillarised organisations, although it no longer holds its historical meaning. In cities, pillarised organisations are the minority (fewer than one in five), while outside the cities between 47% and 61% of CSOs are pillarised organisations. At its peak, pillarisation meant living in a compartmentalised society, whereby individual members' lives were fully integrated into the pillar "from the cradle to the grave" (Hellemans, 1990: 26). This is certainly no longer the case. The political aspect of pillars have also (almost) disappeared—people no longer live their social lives within the boundaries of ideological organisations that are tightly coupled to the political system. They are no longer the platform for institutionalised

exchange between civil society and local governments. However, it is unclear what has come in its place, which takes us to our next research questions: How can the relationship with the government be characterised in this post-pillarised landscape? And to what extent are new types of organisations emerging?

5.6.3 Interaction with local government

Our survey findings show that respondents perceive their organisations to be highly autonomous in relation to the local government, with mostly limited financial ties and low levels of governmental monitoring. Access to local government is no longer organised by pillarised structures, as these pillars have mostly lost their institutional meaning at the local level. Institutional access through local advisory councils is well established, with most CSOs being official members of (at least one of) these councils, yet only a minority seems to be actively involved (in the sense of frequent participation), with a quarter of CSOs showing no or very limited participation. Focus groups show that especially the culture councils hold little political importance, but are considered more as tools for CSOs to gain access to practical support by local government. Other councils seemed to provide more space for political action, although the personal characteristics of the members were important for this to occur. Flemish municipalities have many different local advisory councils, all according to different domains: youth, elderly, culture, sports, environment, agriculture, public planning, international solidarity, etc. Not all of these councils function in the same manner, and our findings suggest that interpersonal dynamics can inject them with a positive dynamic. In addition, the survey respondents report that they can personally contact local politicians and administrators, which suggest that some degree of individual interaction between CSOs and local government is certainly attainable.

Our survey was not suited to explore if and how CSOs were collaborating with each other or with local governments in networks or partnerships. We have only some limited indicators in our survey concerning this issue, and while our focus groups provided little evidence of such partnerships, they were limited in their empirical scope. Indeed, it is certainly plausible that innovative practices are mostly taking place in these types of networks between organisations. The research in this chapter, however, finds that while local governments are considered as partners for some, our focus group analysis suggests that two meanings of 'partnership' are at play: a partner that provides practical support (infrastructure, communication tools, technical support) and a partner that provides institutionalised space for policy advice. Both of these dimensions show only little evidence of a lively relationship.

5.6.4 A new civil society

Using the term 'citizen initiative', we identified 9.9% of CSOs that matched the criteria: a long-term collective structure, initiated by citizens, in which citizens have complete control, and where they are actively involved in the productions of the services, goods or activities of the collective. When we tested this same term in the survey, without providing the criteria, almost 40% of respondents identified themselves as a citizen initiative, among which a number of traditional and even pillarised organisations. One reason for this positive score might be the current interest for this particular topic in the grey literature, spurring an increased awareness of the concept. It might also be related to more strategic reasons: some organisations might want to distance themselves from the label of 'traditional CSO' and position themselves as part of a new type of civil society, even from within the traditional structures.

Our focus groups allow us to discuss the topic of innovation in more general terms. One of the issues that we found is that the meaning of 'new' and 'innovation' is not always clear for those active in their local civil society. Sometimes 'new' mostly means 'young', and what is considered new and innovative (for example, by young CSO-professionals) is not always appreciated by local citizens that have been active in their community for many years.

5.7 Conclusion: living apart together

Our study is foremost an empirical contribution to the literature on the relationship between local government and local CSOs in a neocorporatist context. Overall, the view that emerges is that of a civil society that has its own mission and activities, and of local governments that pursue their own goals and policies. Sometimes they meet in specific projects, but mostly, each stays in their 'own lane'. At the local level, neocorporatist institutions do not generate an active institutional exchange on political issues. Indeed, we also do not find evidence of the trend towards more governance as identified in the literature (Sørensen & Torfing, 2018). One of the issues that we did not explore in depth in our research is the link between the local CSOs and their umbrella organisations. Given that 62.0% is a local group of regional or national umbrella organisations, this issue is an important part of local civil society. From this perspective, the relationship between these CSOS and the central Flemish or national government can in turn affect how local groups operate. Furthermore, while there is a growing literature on citizen initiatives (Igalla et al., 2019), we do not find a widespread emergence of these new form of CSOs. This might be explained by the claim of De Moor (2015) that these types of initiatives have less incentive to organise themselves in countries with more widely supported public services.

These findings lead us to questions on the current state of local governance. If, as is claimed by many, contemporary wicked problems (Head, 2008) require a dynamic collaborative interaction between government and civil society (Brandsen et al., 2016; Dente, Bobbio, & Spada, 2005; Hartley, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2013), then many local communities are facing challenging times. As argued by Brandsen et al. (2015), a possible solution might be found in the “manufacturing of a new civil society by the state” (2015: 5). Yet, our research already points out two major hurdles in assigning local governments with such a mission. One, local CSOs seem to be primarily focused on social capital and less on political issues. When local governments are more willing than civil society to construct new forms of interactive governance, they could possibly end up “flogging a dead horse” (Bekkers & Tummers, 2018: 211). Yet, our research also points to new possibilities as we found that those organisations of people at the margins of society (ethnic-cultural minorities and people experiencing poverty) seem to be more attuned to political issues. Two, local officials seem to be more focused on their own policy priorities, and those that are willing to integrate more collaborative approaches indicate their own limitations and need to improve their knowledge in this regard. Further research could focus not only on what is needed to make collaborative governance work but also on how to overcome these hurdles in local communities where government and civil society only marginally interact on challenging political issues.

In the next chapter, we will present our research on one of these issues: the collaboration in local networks that are taking on a wicked issue (providing shelter and integration for refugees). Whereas the current chapter provided a broad quantitative overview across municipalities, the next chapter will use qualitative methods in three purposely selected urban governance networks.

5.8 Appendix to chapter 5

5.8.1 Overview of municipalities sampled

The four largest cities were partially mapped:

- Kortrijk: the city centre, not the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Hasselt: the city centre, not the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Ghent: we used a random sample of the 25 local districts that are also used by the local government. In total, 11 districts were included (40% of the population).
- Antwerp: three districts were randomly sampled (Borgerhout, Hoboken, city centre).

In order to correct this partial mapping, analyses use weighted observations. The following table shows both the raw unweighted data and the weighted data.

Table 22: Overview of the population and survey sample for chapter 5

Category	City/Municipality	Population	POPULATION				SURVEY (*)			
			Raw data		Weighted data		Raw data		Weighted data	
			n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Rural	GOOIK (**)	9,238	52	2.96%	52	2.01%	19	4.60%	8	1.94%
	INGELMUNSTER	10,792	35	1.99%	35	1.36%	10	2.42%	5	1.21%
Residential	ZEMST	23,240	83	4.72%	83	3.22%	19	4.60%	12	2.91%
	NEVELE (**)	12,110	54	3.07%	54	2.09%	11	2.66%	11	2.66%
	SCHILDE	19,516	34	1.94%	34	1.32%	7	1.69%	4	0.97%
Semi-urban	HEUSDEN-ZOLDER (**)	33,156	129	7.34%	129	5.00%	32	7.75%	20	4.84%
	DIKSMUIDE	16,719	127	7.23%	127	4.92%	30	7.26%	19	4.60%
	DIEST (**)	23,612	118	6.72%	118	4.57%	36	8.72%	26	6.30%
	BORNEM (**)	21,129	74	4.21%	74	2.87%	15	3.63%	10	2.42%
	HAALTERT	18,262	49	2.79%	49	1.90%	9	2.18%	6	1.45%
Cities	ANTWERP	520,504	370	21.06%	666	25.80%	81	19.61%	109	26.39%
	GHENT	259,083	292	16.62%	584	22.63%	55	13.32%	66	15.98%
	HASSELT	77,124	181	10.30%	290	11.24%	44	10.65%	50	12.11%
	KORTRIJK	75,736	159	9.05%	286	11.08%	45	10.90%	67	16.22%
			1757		2581		413		413	

(*) Invitations were sent to organisations for which contact details were available (1660 of 1757)

(**) Municipalities in which focus groups were held

5.8.2 Roles of CSO: factor analysis and mean scales

Table 23: Factor analysis (using Varimax rotation) and reliability scores of CSO roles

	Political role	Service delivery	Social capital
organising / promoting participation in politics	0.814		
(trying to) influence policymakers	0.812		
addressing policymakers on specific themes or problems	0.808		
making people (more) politically aware	0.790		
providing opportunities for citizens to express their opinions and views	0.737		
organising movement and action around social themes or problems	0.603		
participating in advisory boards and committees	0.585		
helping specific target groups with services they would not otherwise receive		0.847	
providing a service or product to relieve a specific social need or need		0.842	
offering services or products that would not otherwise be offered (by government or business)		0.792	
offering services to users/clients		0.744	
giving people the feeling that they belong			0.846
offering people a place where they feel at home			0.815
promoting a sense of community			0.789
bringing together people from different social backgrounds			0.715
engaging and mobilising volunteers			0.470
Cronbach's alpha	0.878	0.853	0.803
Mean (1–5)	2.575	2.844	3.712

Respondents could score each item on a 5-point scale: 1 ('totally not'), 2 ('a little'), 3 ('somewhat'), 4 ('a lot'), and 5 ('very much').

From an initial list of 17 items, one item ('give voice to specific interests or social groups that would otherwise not be heard') was dropped from the factor analysis because it had a significant factor loading (>.40) on two factors (political and community). After the removal of this item, factor analysis was repeated with the remaining 16 items.

6 Local governance networks and the challenge of the ‘refugee crisis’

Qualitative research of three urban governance networks providing shelter and integration for asylum seekers and refugees

6.1 Introduction²¹

In the previous chapter, we concluded that local governments and CSOs in Flanders were living next to each other and showing little interaction. While mostly based on quantitative exploration, our research suggests that government and CSOs mostly stay in their own lane. There does not seem to be a grand shift towards more governance in the towns and cities that were included in our research. This chapter moves beyond the question of whether traditional institutions have been replaced by more governance-type institutions. Instead, we now ask: *If* interactive or collaborative governance occurs, what would be its impact on local government and local civil society?

In order to examine this question, the key is to identify local networks that can qualify for more in-depth research. We will use the term ‘local governance networks’ to describe those arrangements of interactive governance that have been broadly discussed in the literature. Two contextual criteria are important when selecting local governance networks for our research: their substantive and spatial dimensions. *Substantively*, local networks are often proposed as governance institutions that deal with wicked problems (Sørensen & Torfing, 2019; Vermeiren, 2018), whereby the need for new or innovative types of governance are often linked to the inability of existing ‘traditional’ governance to deal with these complex social issues (Hartley et al., 2013; Head & Alford, 2015). *Spatially*, these innovations in governance are often linked to cities (Brandsen et al., 2016), driven by the fact that in a globalised and

²¹ A draft of this chapter was presented at ARNOVA 2019: Pauly, R., Hitchins, T., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2019). “*Innovation or business-as-usual? Local governance dealing with the refugee crisis*”. <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-8636844>

Corresponding CSI Flanders spotlightpaper: Pauly, R., Hitchins, T., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2020). *Lokale netwerken voor opvang en begeleiding van asielzoekers en vluchtelingen tijdens de ‘opvangcrisis’*. <https://www.middenveldinnovatie.be/publicaties>

functionally differentiated world, cities are the place where government and civil society interact closely (Castells, 2010a) and where there is more room for “institutional design experiments” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2019: 2). Cities in the modern world are “a theater of global transformation, including the ways of how people come together, define a common agenda and collectively act to achieve their goals” (Domaradzka, 2018: 608).

In this chapter, we present empirical research on three local governance networks in urban areas in Flanders dealing with the wicked issue of providing shelter and integration for asylum seekers and refugees during the so-called refugee crisis of 2015–2016. We set out to answer the following research question: how do local governance networks take on wicked problems in European neocorporatist cities and how does this impact local CSOs and governments? In the following, we will first discuss how we understand local governance networks and the role of cities in migration and integration policies. Next, we present our case study and methodology. After presenting our main findings we discuss the impact of local governance networks on government and CSOs.

6.2 The ‘refugee crisis’ in European cities

When it comes to dealing with wicked problems, migration can certainly be counted as one. Our case study focuses on local governance networks that became active during the so-called refugee crisis that started in 2015–2016 across Europe. Given the rapid arrival of many new migrants during this period, many European cities had to organise refugee shelters and social services in a relatively short amount of time, either by extending existing or setting up new services and infrastructure. The number of asylum seekers in the European Union was already steadily rising in the years before 2015 (from 263,835 in 2009 to 626,960 in 2014), but in 2015, the inflow more than doubled and remained high in 2016 (1,322,845 in 2015; 1,260,910 in 2016) (Eurostat, 2019). Due to the lack of a coherent EU strategy for the distribution of refugees coming to Europe (Haverkamp, 2018), the number of asylum seekers varies widely between countries, whereby Germany has seen far higher numbers than the UK, the Netherlands, France or Belgium. In Belgium, the number of asylum seekers also doubled between 2014 (22,710) and 2015 (44,660) and decreased again in 2016 (18,280) (Eurostat, 2019). Across Europe, local governments and CSOs organised a wide array of services and infrastructure for the newly arrived immigrants (Mayblin & James, 2019; Mayer, 2018; Meyer & Simsa, 2018; Vandevooordt, 2019).

Migration is mostly associated with the authority and competence of national governments, and cities might be considered primarily as the places where national policies are implemented by state-led actors. This would be a short-sighted view, however, as many authors suggest (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018; Doomernik & Glorius, 2016; Hinger, Schäfer, & Pott, 2016). Migrants do not just live in nation-states; they live in cities, form their own social networks and are part of local communities (Borkert & Caponio, 2010). Based on her research in Germany, Margit Mayer states that local authorities often have to fill in the gaps left by the national government: “The recent scale of arrivals and the slow reaction of national authorities have often left cities at the forefront, forcing them to play a role without having either a legal mandate or any specific budget to do so” (Mayer, 2018: 234). This local role should not only be seen as the result of failed national policies or local ‘gap filling’. A distinct local politics concerning migration and integration can point to a certain decoupling (Peace & Meer, 2019) of local migration and integration policies. This difference can be the result of pragmatic choices made by local authorities in dealing with the consequences of international migration in their cities (Duyvendak & Scholten, 2011). Others have argued that cities can develop their own local policies not merely out of practical necessity, but also because of diverging politics or competing institutional logics (Jorgensen, 2012; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). This not only concerns how to provide shelter and support for migrants but extends to questions of citizenship as “cities have become important arenas for the enactment of urban citizenship through the social inclusion of non-citizens like the undocumented” (Lambert & Swerts, 2019: 91). Cities can actively shape the rights of migrants (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Fauser, 2019; Oomen & Baumgärtel, 2018). For instance, sanctuary cities often develop local policies that oppose more exclusionary national policies (Bauder, 2017).

Civil society plays a crucial role for newly arrived migrants. A recent literature review identified the many ways in which CSOs provide support for migrants (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, & Beckmann, 2017). Leaving aside the domain of research, there are three main clusters of activities: providing (basic) services, developing capacities and giving voice. If we compare these roles to our research on the roles of local CSOs in chapter 5, we would have categorised the first two clusters as service delivery, while the last cluster would have been categorised as political advocacy. The relationship between CSOs and local government can be crucial for the development of the CSOs. Vandevordt (2019) argues that the political discourse and policy regulations at the federal level both activate and restrict local CSOs. On the one hand, local CSOs respond to what they perceive to be crucial shortcomings of federal and/or Flemish policies and are thus activated by this government failure. On the other hand, shifting federal policies (i.e., closing refugee shelters in certain cities) made it impossible for these networks to institutionalise their presence as part of the local governance system. The development of

local initiatives can be severely limited by the national policy framework, yet still have substantial localised effects in their urban communities: “In this sense, eroding migrants’ rights and fostering civil solidarity appear as two sides of the same coin” (Vandevoordt, 2019: 115). Of course, there are different logics and strategies within civil society as well. For example, Lambert and Swerts (2019) show how the tension between professional and activist CSOs can have a significant impact on the public debate. They show how in their case study, cooperation with the local government led professional organisations to adopt a more depoliticised discourse. Local CSOs also engage in interorganisational cooperation or local governance networks (Strokosch & Osborne, 2017). However, empirical research on the interaction with local governments in governance networks remains scarce (Garkisch et al., 2017).

6.3 Local governance networks

This dissertation understands local governance networks in an agnostic sense, as we have discussed in chapter 2, which means that we do not see networks as essentially trust bases that are innovative in and of themselves. Using a definition by Sørensen and Torfing, local governance networks in this chapter are understood as a set of relations formed by *interdependent* (public and private) and *autonomous* actors, who organise themselves *non-coercively* (i.e., horizontally) in the pursuit of one or more public goals (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007). Not all networks have the same ambitions; they range from short-term goals to long-term systemic change. Keast and Brown (2007) propose to differentiate between three degrees of horizontal integration, from cooperation (short-term information exchange) through coordination (medium-term, actors remain separate but contribute to joint action with a specific goal) to collaboration (longer-term, high interdependency, working towards systemic change). How to form local collaborative governance networks can depend on different factors, as identified by Ansell and Gash (2008): suitable starting conditions, the characteristics of the collaborative process itself, the presence of leadership, the institutional design, and the outcome. In this chapter, we will explore three issues that impact the functioning of local governance networks: boundary spanning, the role of political leadership and the issue of depoliticisation. The first issue, boundary spanning, deals with the flow of information and resources that makes governance networks function (Van Meerkerk, 2014). The second issue, political leadership, has been found to be important not only for organisations but for governance networks as well (Ricard, Klijn, Lewis, & Ysa, 2016; Sørensen & Torfing, 2019). The third issue, depoliticisation, is of particular importance for governance networks as they

run the risk of prioritising consensus building over dealing with divisive political issues (Sørensen & Torfing, 2017).

6.3.1 Boundary spanning

Governance networks are about exchanging information and resources, which is not an abstract process but concerns concrete organisations and people who are making decisions about how to work in the network. Boundary spanning refers to the combination of the three related activities: *linking people and processes* of different organisations, *finding relevant information* for the organisation in the wider networks and *translating* information from outside the organisation for use inside the organisation (Van Meerkerk, 2014). In sum, boundary spanning means proactively crossing the boundaries between the organisations in the network. Boundary spanning can thus be seen as a function in the network, a role that is taken by the actors in the networks or a type of activity that shapes the network. From the perspective of the organisations in a governance network, boundary spanning can take place on different organisational levels: frontline professionals, managers and leaders (Williams, 2013). In the case of our research, this means that on three levels, boundary spanning can be attributed to administrators and politicians in local government, as well as volunteers, professionals and managers of CSOs.

6.3.2 Political leadership

A lot of research focuses on how new forms of leadership can contribute to governance networks by bringing the relevant actors together, managing varying expectations and different interests, dealing with conflict or building trust. In contrast to top-down leadership, this network-type leadership is often referred to as facilitative leadership (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bussu & Bartels, 2014), political leadership (Denters, Steyvers, Klok & Cermak, 2018; Greasley & Stoker, 2008), political interactive leadership (Sørensen & Torfing, 2019) or adaptive and collaborative leadership (Head & Alford, 2015). However, Cepiku and Mastrodascio point out that the literature on leadership in networks “tends to assume that network leadership needs to be different, but with little empirical evidence to support this” (2019: 5), although their own research does suggest a difference between single-agency leadership and networks.

Thus, while leadership is increasingly seen as an important element for analysing governance networks, it can be hard to offer a clear description of exactly what it is and how leadership works in a governance network. In this chapter, we will use a description by Ricard et al. (2016) who identified several leadership styles and summarised the main characteristics of the

network governance leadership as “one of facilitating, activating actors and necessary resources, and enhancing their collaboration” (2016: 7). As such, leaders “have to build trust and cooperation among actors with different perceptions of problems in question, different ideas about the most desirable solutions to them and different interests” (2016: 7).

6.3.3 Depoliticisation

In chapter 2 we have argued that governance runs the risk of becoming depoliticised, i.e., the pursuit of a shared consensus dominates the networks at the expense of more deliberate and potentially divisive political action (2.3.3c. , page 58). This issue is particularly salient in the context of migration and integration. As we have discussed in the previous paragraph, the politicisation of migrants in the city can vary from pragmatic concerns to decoupling policies that aim for more inclusionary politics in opposition to national regulation (e.g., Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019). In the cases of governance networks, both governmental actors and CSOs are engaging in dealing with issues that can be politically divisive, e.g., housing for refugees, labour rights or cultural diversity. Depoliticisation occurs when CSOs would no longer put this issue on the agenda of the network but instead would opt for a manageable consensus and less conflict (Lambert & Swerts, 2019). Whereas boundary spanning and political leadership can contribute to the functioning of the network, depoliticisation is usually seen as part of the outcome, in the sense that working in networks might *result in* depoliticising the issue at hand.

6.4 Methodology

6.4.1 Case selection

We focus on the issue of refugee policies formed in the wake of the so-called recent refugee crisis through a comparative case study of local governance networks in three cities in Flanders. In the Belgian federal state, regulations concerning refugees and asylum seekers are divided across the federal (i.e., asylum applications and organising shelter), Flemish (i.e., integration services) and local (i.e., implementation of both federal and Flemish refugee policies) level. We chose cities within the same subnational system (Flanders) since this provides our cases with a similar supralocal regulatory framework. Furthermore, we opted to select cases in cities that are considered to be central cities by the Flemish government, which means that each city has a central role in their respective regional urban system. In each of these three cities, a refugee shelter was erected in the wake of the inflow of asylum seekers and refugees in 2015. In order to empirically examine our research questions, we needed to be able to identify cities in which at least some minimal form of governance networks were

active. In sum, we selected cases that are similar in environmental context but dissimilar in local institutional characteristics. This allowed us to examine the explanatory power of institutional characteristics regarding possible differences in how these local governance networks impact governments and CSOs.

There are 13 'central cities' in Flanders, and we used our criteria to discuss possible suitable cities with a representative of a Flemish umbrella organisation working with refugees and local CSOs. They have close contacts with CSOs in many Flemish cities, either as members or as partners. Together, we identified three possible locations: Ghent, Mechelen and Sint-Niklaas.

6.4.2 Data collection

We conducted 25 in-depth interviews with 34 key local actors in the three cities (see Table 24 below). We started our selection by identifying local actors through desktop research for each city, using public lists available from local government and Flemish umbrella organisations. In each city, we asked respondents which other actors they deemed relevant for our research purposes, which we then invited for an interview. Data collection took place between March and August 2019. Due to practical considerations, we were not able to interview every involved actor (the Appendix provides a full list of all actors that are formally acknowledged as part of the local networks). Instead, we focused on those that were considered central or key actors by the network participants we spoke to. The interviews were semi-structured and followed a topic list which contained three main topics: the role of the respondent in the organisation and a history of the organisation, the relationship with local government or CSOs (depending on the respondent) and questions on the functioning of the network and their role and history in the network. The interviews focused on the formation of the network (2015–2016) and the evolution of the networks until early 2019. For each case, a timeline of events was reconstructed by the author (using desktop research) and used to discuss the history of the network, each time further fine-tuning and correcting the timeline. When information on the history of the organisation was available beforehand, we used a similar approach to discuss the evolution of the organisation. On the topic of the relationship with the government, we focused on identifying the relevant governmental actors and the perceptions of the respondents regarding their relationship. We also discussed their sources of income. Concerning the network, besides the history of the network, the interviews served to gather information on identifying the key actors of the network (both from government and CSOs), the role of the CSO in the network, the various arenas of the network (where were decisions made, where did exchange occur), as well as the role of formal rules and informal practices.

Table 24: Interviews conducted in each city

	Ghent		Sint-Niklaas		Mechelen	
	persons	interviews	persons	interviews	persons	interviews
Local government	5	4	5	3	6	3
Other government	-	-	-	-	2	1
CSO	4	3	7	6	5	5
Total	9	7	12	9	13	9

6.5 Brief overview of the cases

6.5.1 Migration, shelter and integration policies in Belgium and Flanders

In Belgium, the policies regarding migration, asylum and integration are diffused across different governments. We will highlight some key issues here. The Belgian federal government has authority over migration and the provision of shelter. The Flemish subnational government has authority over integration services and has also mandated that local authorities take up a governance role regarding the organisation of local integration services.

Federal regulation on the provision of shelter is implemented by the federal agency Fedasil. Shelter in Belgium is provided in two forms: individual and collective shelter. Individual shelter is provided in a single housing unit, even if several housing units are situated in the same building. Collective shelter is provided in reception shelters for a larger number of people. By the end of 2018, most asylum seekers were housed in collective shelters (64% of 21,190 available places, based on numbers from Fedasil) (Fedasil, n.d.). The available infrastructure for shelter has been the subject of volatile political decisions, leading to a reduction in permanent shelters between 2012 and 2015 that were steadily maintained in the years after, whereas in the wake of the crisis, temporary shelters filled in the gaps and were being closed down again from 2017 to 2019. In the meantime, places in individual shelters were being reduced in favour of a policy of housing asylum seekers in collective centres (Fedasil, 2019). Fedasil either manages these collective shelters itself or assigns contracts to private actors, usually the Red Cross (at the end of 2019, 37 of the 60 collective shelters were managed by private nonprofit actors). This policy of contracting out the organisation of shelters was also put to use in the wake of the crisis in order to be able to establish new centres more quickly. In all three cities in our case study, temporary shelters were installed. In Mechelen and Sint-

Niklaas, the Red Cross managed the centre; in Ghent, centre management was assigned to G4S Care, a private for-profit corporation.

The Flemish government had restructured the field of integration organisations in the years before the crisis, which resulted in a new legislative framework in 2013. Following this reform, the Flemish Agency for Integration was created in 2015 and became responsible for the implementation of the integration policies (as stated by the law in 2013). Historically, this field was the domain of many CSOs, often in cooperation with local or provincial governments. The Agency replaces these services, further centralising integration policies in a more restrictive framework (Van Puymbroeck, 2016). The Agency is active across Flanders, except for the cities of Ghent and Antwerp, which were given their own local administrative agencies responsible for the implementation of integration policies. For our case study, this means that in Ghent, the agency In-Gent is responsible for implementing integration policies; in Sint-Niklaas and Mechelen, this role is assigned to the Flemish Agency for Integration.

Furthermore, the Decree on Flemish Integration of 2013 assigned local authorities with a governance role, stating that local authorities have to coordinate the relevant actors needed for their integration policies. This role remains somewhat unclear for local authorities, however, as they are unsure about what it means and how to implement it in practice (Deprez, Platteau, & Hondegheem, 2018). Aside from this specific role, municipalities in Flanders have some level of discretionary authority for policies regarding the integration of migrants (e.g., material support, housing, shelter, education, wellbeing). From 2016 to the end of 2018, the Flemish government provided local governments with supplementary temporary funding in order to expand local services for migrants in light of the higher number of asylum seekers.

6.5.2 Description of the three networks

Each of the local networks was formed in response to the so-called refugee crisis of 2015-2016 when in each of these cities a temporary shelter was constructed. Two networks, in Ghent and Mechelen, were disassembled in 2018 when these temporary shelters were closed. In Sint-Niklaas, the local network was never disassembled as the temporary shelter was not closed as planned and was later estimated to have remained open until sometime in 2020. Table 25 provides a first brief overview of the three networks. Below we will provide a brief description of the goals and structure of each network. In the Appendix, a full list of the participants in each network can be found.

Table 25: Overview of the three local governance networks (2015–2018)

	Ghent	Sint-Niklaas	Mechelen
Structure	Vertically integrated: - Steering committee (government) - Plenary meetings - 3 working groups with various subgroups	Horizontal coordination group	Temporary administrative coordination group
Time horizon	Short-term, but intentions for longer-term development	Long-term with short-term expansion	Short-term
Temporary shelter	250 places (03/2016–03/2017)	500 places (09/2015–12/2020)	150 places (03/2016–12/2016)

a. Ghent: Refugee Taskforce

By the end of 2015, local government initiated a taskforce to prepare for the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees. The mayor delegated his competence to the alderman presiding over the Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW), who initiated the idea of mobilising a network of public and private actors. Many residents already began collecting goods to bring to the migrant camps in Calais (e.g., the local associations Victoria Deluxe and vzw Humain), which was later also initiated by residents for migrants arriving in Ghent (e.g., by the initially ad-hoc-organised Heart for Refugees). At the time, the city of Ghent knew that the federal government would organise some form of centre for sheltering asylum seekers, although the precise location and date were still unknown. Local authorities had some experience with organising a centre for shelter in its own City Shelter Initiative (SOI), which provided temporary housing for asylum seekers that lived in precarious conditions. In September 2015, the first gathering of the Refugee Taskforce took place, where the alderman appointed a civil servant to be the administrative coordinator for the Taskforce. This administrator already had experience in local governmental social services and had worked for several years for the federal organisation responsible for asylum applications (Commissariat for Refugees and Stateless People [CVGS]). The Taskforce was established to bring together actors from both local government and civil society. From the start it was set up to be organised in three main working groups, focusing on shelter, integration and volunteering and awareness. The working group 'integration' was further divided into subgroups that focused on particular domains (e.g., work, leisure, education, language, ...). Appendix 1 provides a full list of the various groups. By the end of 2015, the federal agency Fedasil had contracted G4S Care, a private for-profit

corporation, to manage the centre for shelter in Ghent. G4S Care renovated an existing prison ship (the Reno) and started providing shelter in March 2016.

In the first instance, the Taskforce was used to invite CSOs that already had a working relationship with the various departments of local governments. Yet, various new initiatives emerged, such as *vzw Humain* (material support for migrant camps in Calais), *Dine with Us* (an online platform for inviting migrants for a meal at home with residents in Ghent), *Critical Mass Ghent* (a newly formed action group striving for cycling infrastructure, now organising bike rides for newcomers). A local action group, *Heart for Refugees*, gathered material goods for refugees and quickly grew into a central hub for providing material and social assistance. *Refu Interim* grew out of a local cultural organisation (*Cirq*) and provided migrants with the opportunity to volunteer at cultural events. These initiatives did not grow out of the local network, but the local network did provide opportunities to connect with other organisations and exchange information during gatherings. The initiative *Heart for Refugees* quickly became subsidised by local government, which further stimulated the organisation, allowing them to employ a professional (albeit half-time). Furthermore, the city rented infrastructure where goods could be stored and which served as the physical meeting place for its networks—now under the name *the Olive Tree*, which opened in May 2016. In exchange for this support, the organisation was asked to open its activities for all residents of Ghent who were in precarious living situations, and other social services in the city referred their clients to the new centre.

In May 2016, the Flemish government provided supplementary, and temporary, financial support for cities and municipalities. While these financial means were directly given to the local government, the Taskforce was used to set priorities for distributing at least part of these means. They were used to pay for hiring the administrative coordinator, as well as some additional local administrators in social services and the local integration agency. Services by CSOs were also expanded (e.g., centres for general wellbeing, youth work, mental health services), as well as some new initiatives (such as the abovementioned Olive Tree). European project-based subsidies were also used for a local employment project (cooperation between local government, the local integration agency and the VDAB) and a project on youth wellbeing and mental health (by the local integration agency).

Moreover, we found that the formal organisational operation of the Taskforce was adapted in practice in two areas, mainly because of the need for rapid decision-making. Firstly, the coordination of the Taskforce is carried out by both an administrative coordinator and a member of the political cabinet of the leading aldermen. This appears to be important at various times to give political weight to the Taskforce: the doors of the city services and

external organisations open more quickly if there is clear political weight. Secondly, in addition to the administrative steering committee, a separate political consultation committee was set up. In a normal context (i.e., outside the crisis network), administrative decisions are first discussed within a so-called political consultation group (consisting of the concerned aldermen) and then in the local council (i.e., the Council of Mayor and Aldermen). Due to the need for quick decision-making during the crisis, this political consultation was organised in a smaller form (one alderman per party), so that decisions from the working groups and steering committee could be discussed more quickly. This provided political backing for the decisions, which could then be formally acknowledged and discussed in the regular meetings of the local council.

In March 2017, the Reno was closed after sheltering about four hundred asylum seekers, although it was recently confirmed that it would be reopened in 2020, this time no longer outsourced to third parties but instead under management of the federal agency (Fedasil) itself. Following the closure of the shelter and the expiration of the Flemish crisis subsidies, the local network was dismantled. However, in September 2018, the local government decided on forming a new network—a migration forum—to bring together local actors with the goal of forming more long-term policy goals and cooperation. Local government also decided, at least temporarily, to continue subsidising certain initiatives that were initially subsidised by the Flemish resources (among others, the Olive Tree).

b. Mechelen: M-Power

In Mechelen, a local network was formed at the initiative of the local government. In November 2015, the mayor communicated that the city would take responsibility in light of the never-before-seen asylum crisis. The local government set out a local programme, consisting of providing shelter and the expansion of social services (i.e., the M-Power plan). The city proposed to the federal government to organise a temporary shelter in Mechelen, for which they proposed a location. The expansion of social services was focused on housing (e.g., rental agencies), language (providing easy and faster access to courses), psychological counselling (e.g., expanding existing specialised counselling for migrants) and a digital platform to exchange information. A coordination group was formed to manage the process, consisting mostly of local administrators and some key actors from local civil society. Initially, three CSOs were represented: the local Centre for General Wellbeing (CAW), a health-and-wellbeing CSO (Emmaüs) and the Local Support Centre for Asylum and Migrations (a local CSO specialising in supporting newly arrived migrants) (see Appendix 3 for the list of members). The coordination group holds monthly gatherings, and the lead administrator also reports back to the local Council of Aldermen every month.

In March 2016, a temporary shelter (until mid-December 2016) was inaugurated, whereby the city also hired a new civil servant to act as operational coordinator for refugee shelter, who was to coordinate between the city council and the Red Cross. This coordinator could also address other organisations and services on an ad-hoc basis, based on questions and needs. The arrival of the shelter inspired a number of citizens under the name 'Welcome in Mechelen', to welcome asylum seekers and help them integrate. Soon, the voluntary work of 'Welcome' was discussed with the Red Cross and the operational coordinator of the city. After a few months (from June 2017), Welcome also participated in the monthly consultation of the coordination group, as did the Red Cross (from October 2016). An important actor in local civil society is the Local Support Centre for Asylum Seekers (*Steunpunt Asiel & Migratie vzw*). This nonprofit organisation already has a long history in Mechelen: it was founded at the end of the 1980s at the initiative of the local government (as part of the Public Centre for Social Welfare but established as an independent nonprofit) but has become more autonomous over the years, although it has remained an important partner of the local administration over the years.

In 2016, we also see the impact of the additional Flemish subsidies in Mechelen. These resources were used by the local administration to strengthen the functioning of the Local Support Centre CSO, which had a contract with another CSO (*Solentra vzw*) for specialised mental health services for migrants and refugees. Other organisations also reported to the town council to offer their services. *Emmaüs* (health and wellbeing) proposed to provide its services for unaccompanied minors, for which additional Flemish project resources are sought together with the local government. Other organisations in Mechelen which worked on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees also took initiative, but they were not involved in the structural monthly consultations: a new CSO *Voice*, founded by people who arrived as refugees themselves, focused on sociocultural activities by and for newcomers in Mechelen; a local humanistic association makes its building available as a meeting place for other organisations; *De Keeting* collected and distributed material support; community health centre *Wel en Wee* took in migrants as clients.

The administrative coordination group was dismantled in 2017, following the closure of the temporary reception centre. In March 2019, however, a temporary reception centre was reopened in another location, and was expected to remain open until December 2020. With this new start-up, the coordination group was also re-established.

c. Sint-Niklaas: refugee coordination

In 2015, a platform for refugee coordination was set up in Sint-Niklaas, involving mainly local civil servants and politicians, together with some key actors from the civil society (*CAW*, *VLOS vzw*, *Red Cross*) (see the appendix at the end of this chapter for the full list of members). Not every CSO that organises services for refugees was included in this platform, but the actors that are included are recognised as having a broad reach across the local community. The specificity of Sint-Niklaas is that a shelter for asylum seekers has already existed in the city centre since 2001, with room for 150 people at a time. Moreover, the city has had a refugee coordination group since 2008, although this was initially formed as a first-line network. It was set up at the initiative of a civil servant (the refugee worker) in response to demands from other frontline workers (including CSOs) for more consultation and mutual coordination between both civil servants and the local civil society. With the arrival of the additional temporary shelter for asylum seekers (with room for 500 people) in September 2015, this existing consultation platform was transformed into a monthly meeting for policy coordination, and from then included the mayor, the relevant aldermen as well as the heads of administrative departments. Unlike in Mechelen, which has an administrative coordination group, here we see a consultation structure in which politicians are directly involved.

In 2016, just like Mechelen and Ghent, Sint-Niklaas received additional Flemish funding, and Sint-Niklaas also received an increased federal grant (meant for municipalities with existing shelters). Using these additional resources the city strengthened its own services as well as allocated resources to CSOs. In the case of its own services, this concerned extra staff (e.g., administrative and social workers and a language coach) in the departments of wellbeing (integration, social activation and education teams), services (team of foreigners) and environment (team of residents). Using the coordination platform, additional resources were also deployed for CSOs. The city set up a programme with *CAW* for a ‘buddy project’ (i.e., individual support using volunteers), and a local mental health CSO (*CGG*) received additional resources for the recruitment of a trauma psychologist. The Centre for Pupil Counselling (*CLB*) also received financial support. Two social grocery stores (*De Springplank* and *VLOS*) also temporarily received an increased subsidy (each approx. 25,000 euros). Other CSOs (*Bonangana*, *VormingPlus* and *De Regenboog*) received funds for language activities. In Sint-Niklaas, too, a new CSO emerged: in 2017, *Like a Rolling Stone vzw* was set up, establishing a transit house for young and unaccompanied minor refugees. This initiative was set up in collaboration with the local authorities (the *PCSW*): they rent infrastructure to the *PCSW* which guides young asylum seekers, while *Like a Rolling Stone* provides guidance with volunteers. During the interviews, it was striking that the *VLOS*, in particular, is seen as an important actor in the local midfield. Other local actors invariably refer to their activities, and even people

outside Sint-Niklaas are aware of their operation. VLOS has been active in Sint-Niklaas since 1997 and started as a local service for newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees. Throughout the years it has been increasingly focused on undocumented migrants. VLOS provides a wide range of services: a social grocer (reach of approximately 120 persons per week), a Bazaar and Warehouse (material assistance), social and cultural activities, medical services (three days per week) and individual administrative and legal guidance (mainly in function of the asylum procedure). VLOS also has a number of houses for people in a precarious situation that it rents out or uses as emergency shelter. It is almost entirely funded by private donations, except for some subsidies from the local government for its social grocer.

Contrary to Mechelen and Ghent, the temporary shelter in Sint-Niklaas was not closed during the period of our research, although this was uncertain for some time. In 2018 there was still talk of closing this shelter, but with the increasing need for reception increasing again towards the end of that year, it was decided to keep the centre open for an indefinite period of time. Consequently, the refugee consultations remained active during this period, although the Flemish crisis resources were not extended.

6.6 Findings

6.6.1 The ambitions of the network

The networks that we have discussed in this chapter seem to be rather exceptional cases in Flanders—we stated this at the start of this chapter. Using the typology by Keast and Brown (2007) of the different degrees of cooperation for horizontal integration, we argue that even within this niche of networking, collaborative networking seems to be a niche itself. Indeed, all of these networks are primarily concerned with establishing coordination mechanisms for a short-term period. Table 26 below provides an overview of the elements of the three networks according to their different dimensions of horizontal integration. It shows how each of these networks is mostly focused on a mix of cooperation and coordination. The main reason is, of course, that these networks were established for dealing with a crisis, and they were formed in response to federal policies (providing additional temporary shelters) and Flemish policies (coordination of integration services). In Sint-Niklaas we see that in response to the temporary shelter remaining open, the local network has remained in place, which points to the impact of national decision-making on the local context. In Mechelen, the network was dismantled after the temporary shelter was closed. However, in 2019, a new temporary shelter was opened, and the network was reinstalled. Only in Ghent do we find that local actors have the intention of restructuring the local network on a longer term, with the aim of developing local

policies. While the Taskforce has been dismantled, a new initiative (Migration Forum) intends to bring key local actors together in a governance network with a longer-term perspective (this initiative was only started during our data collection). Another initiative in Ghent, Taskforce Housing, seems to be inspired by what the initiators in local government consider the success of the Refugee Taskforce, and it intends to become a longer-term local governance network.

The organisations within each of these local networks retain their autonomy, although there is extensive fine-tuning in terms of concrete services or target audience. There are few examples of local actors going beyond their normal territory because of the network dynamics. Of course, the fact that the actors remain active within their respective domain also has to do with the specific objectives of this network for a specific target group: everyone starts from the activities they already do. We do see the emergence of new organisations, yet these seem to have emerged even without the network. For example, the new CSO 'Refu Interim' (Ghent) was formed by the members of a cultural association (Cirq) after a successful one-time initiative of working with asylum seekers as volunteers; in Mechelen, citizens formed the integration initiative 'Welcome in Mechelen' without input from the network, although they did eventually become a key actor in the local network (which we will discuss later).

6.6.2 Federal refugee shelters

In every city, the arrival of refugees in the temporary shelter was the event that triggered the formation of the governance networks. In the first instance, these shelters were a policy issue that needed to be managed. It concerned questions of infrastructure, material support, psychosocial counselling and social services. Local officials started preparing and communicating to the public what their intentions were, and CSOs and citizens reacted to the arrival of refugees by initially offering material support. In a sense, the refugee crisis was a depoliticised issue, masked by managing a crisis and driven for many by humanitarian concerns of immediate assistance. In some cases (Ghent and Sint-Niklaas), local protest groups gathered in front of the refugee shelter. Our finding echoes research by Vanhellemont (2016) on urban planning, who states that "triggering events" are especially strong when they can be linked to a specific place (2016: 304). While we do not have a counterfactual to consider what would have happened if all newly arrived asylum seekers would have been housed throughout the city, respondents related their motivations to partake in the network with the housing of migrants in these specific shelters. Importantly, while the temporary shelters had a mobilising effect, they were a necessary but not sufficient factor in establishing local networks. The decision to form local networks was linked to a local political vision and forms of political leadership, which we discuss in the following.

Table 26: Dimensions of cooperation (a), coordination (b), collaboration (c)

		Ghent	Mechelen	Sint-Niklaas
Time taken to establish				
a	Short-term	networks started quickly as a form of crisis management		
b	Medium-term	_____	ability to re-install network for new shelter (2019/2020)	_____
c	Longer-term	continuation in two new networks?	_____	built on existing frontline network
Goals/Perspective				
a	Dialogue, information sharing, remain autonomous	through workgroups and plenary meetings	monthly meetings as exchange of information	
b	Align Resources, some joint planning	- allocation of funds from the central govt. - project-based		
c	Synergise to create something new, highly interdependent	First steps towards local politics on undocumented migrants	_____	_____
Structural Linkages				
a	Loose links	working groups are open	Ad-hoc or project-based cooperation with actors that are not formal members	
b	Some stability	vertical integration of network	core group of (mainly) local govt. and key CSOs	
c	Tight links; move outside traditional areas	_____		
Formality				
a b c	Informal	Informal contact between local actors, part of building trust with new actors		
b c	Formal	Networks have formal administrative structure and formal decision-making processes.		

6.6.3 Political leadership

In each of these three cases, local politicians (mayors or aldermen) were the initiators of the network: they set the initial guidelines and invited others to join the network. In Ghent, the mayor delegated his authority to a local alderman, who became the leading political actor in the network and who emphasised the local policy of providing broad social services for the newly arriving migrants. In Mechelen, the initiative to establish a federal centre was taken by local government, where the mayor publicly communicated that the city had to take its responsibility. In Sint-Niklaas, both the mayor and a local alderwoman took part in the monthly coordination meetings and transformed the existing local network of frontline practitioners into a platform for exchange at the policy level. These political leaders gave the local networks the necessary political capital; because local policymakers were actively engaged, the network was taken seriously by the participants. We found that two other characteristics of political leadership were important for the network: communicating a clear vision and remaining accessible for other actors.

When we look at the vision that was propagated, we notice in Mechelen and Ghent the importance of individual personification of the local policy vision. In Mechelen, the mayor announced the M-Power plan with which the city expanded services for integration and which was meant for all the citizens of Mechelen. In talks with actors from Mechelen, regular reference was made to the vision of diversity and integration that the mayor promoted. In Ghent, the leading alderman promoted the BBB+B policy (Bed, Bath, Bread + Beyond); he is recognised by the other actors for his proactive approach in setting up the broad cooperation between civil society and the government. In Sint-Niklaas we did not find such a personification of a local vision, which is not to say that there is no personal commitment of aldermen or mayor. After all, we see how the presence of mayor and aldermen gives the reformed local network the necessary political weight. Furthermore, we found that the presence of a longer-established refugee shelter (since 2001) was an important part of the local context in which the establishment of the new temporary shelter was considered mostly a pragmatic issue.

What contributes to the impact of local administrators on the network is that these leading politicians could also be reached directly by other local actors to discuss ideas and proposals in depth. We can see how that created a relationship of trust with new organisations (e.g., Welcome in Mechelen or Heart for Refugees) but also how, in the case of strong political antagonisms (e.g., VLOS in Sint-Niklaas), this accessibility ensures that an open line is maintained, although this open line does not mean that both actors come to a solution for the antagonism. What is striking is that the party-political colour does not seem to play a direct

role as far as this political leadership is concerned. After all, these three local governments are led by different coalitions with different parties providing the mayors (socialist, liberal and Flemish nationalist). Part of the explanation will in any case have to do with our selection bias: we searched specifically for cases where we knew in advance that there was at least a minimal degree of collaboration in networks. Another explanation seems to lie in the fact that these local networks are working from a certain pragmatism. That does not mean that there is no politics. After all, many CSOs work from a clear vision of social change: they work on the social integration of newcomers or stand up for the rights of people they feel are not sufficiently supported by the government. This is a form of politicisation—a striving for social change. In this area, tension can indeed arise between the actors involved. We will discuss this in more detail in the next sections.

6.6.4 Institutionalisation of new organisations

In these networks, the actors involved mostly expand their activities or start new projects that build on their existing expertise. However, we did find new organisations or initiatives emerging, and even though these started mostly outside of the governance network, some quickly became part of the local network.

In the first instance, local governments turned to the organisations with which they already have a certain relationship. We see this both in the creation of the networks and somewhat later, in the allocation of the additional Flemish subsidies. These supplementary resources were aimed both at expanding governmental services as well as those of the established organisations (such as the CAW local wellbeing centres). In itself, this should not come as a surprise; these are services that are well known from a local government perspective. Interestingly, we saw that VLOS in Sint-Niklaas was not so much supported for its services to undocumented migrants, but it did receive a small subsidy for its social grocer. VLOS has been active for a long time in Sint-Niklaas, and its work with undocumented migrants can create some tensions with the local government. However, because of their expertise and local reach, they are nevertheless involved in the core group of the network.

In the case of newer organisations, we see that seeking access to the network does not always mean that they want to participate in a structural consultation. Refu Interim in Ghent was mainly looking for financial support to further develop their successful start-up and looked at the Taskforce mainly as a useful way to get to know other organisations or occasionally exchange information about the volunteer work they provided. Voice, a CSO in Mechelen, gained its access to the local network when it needed to, mainly through informal personal

contacts both with local politicians and local CSOs. For organisations that join the network in a more structural way, it is also important that they establish contacts with politicians and civil servants in order to get to know each other. We see that well-known organisations can mediate here (which we discuss below, under 'boundary spanning'). The issue is that a certain amount of trust has to be established.

Occasionally there also seem to be tensions between the old and new civil society. Some citizens see their initiatives as flexible and enterprising but come up against what they see as bureaucratic organisations. These old CSOs in turn see many good intentions but also many pitfalls. It is on these points that we noticed how important the mediation of a civil servant can be. A good example is the mediation between Welcome in Mechelen and the Red Cross, who managed the shelter to which Welcome in Mechelen wanted to have access (in order to establish contact with the newly arrived migrants). Other tension between new and older organisations concerns different perspectives on their respective expertise. In Mechelen, Solentra vzw, a new organisation, offers services in a domain where many other traditional organisations are active and thus offer a competing service. For local administrators and politicians, the distinction between the different organisations is not always clear, precisely because they do not have the expertise. The initiative of Solentra in Mechelen was supported by a well-known local CSO with close ties to local government who bridged this knowledge gap: firstly, as a trusted actor, they acted as a mediator, pointing out the needs for this specific service in the city to the local administrators; secondly, an experimental start-up phase was implemented by finding supralocal funding, which reduced the initial start-up costs on the part of the local government. Finally, confidence in the new actor could develop on the basis of the concrete realisations of this start-up phase, and if necessary, could be continued with more direct local involvement (which did indeed occur).

6.6.5 Politicisation *in* and *of* the networks

One of the issues that came to the foreground in our research was the local policies concerning undocumented migrants. It is regarding this issue that the aspect of politicisation comes to the fore most sharply in our cases. After all, through its social services in the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW), the local government comes into direct contact with people in this situation. In addition, there are CSOs in the civil society that work on behalf of these people by offering shelter and material aid such as clothing or food, support for integrating into social networks or organising administrative, legal or psychological counselling. In each of our cases, we have found organisations that work for undocumented migrants. Within the local networks, we see that local governments deal with this reality with different strategies. Nowhere did we

find that government and civil society turn against each other, or turn away from each other, even though political tensions exist.

From our cases we derive two ideal-typical strategies with which local governments position themselves: a strategy of pragmatic understanding and a strategy of joint policy development. The first strategy consists of maintaining a pragmatic relationship between local government and civil society. By this we mean that the local government focuses on its own services for this target group and that certain CSOs also provide their own, often more comprehensive services. There is no joint local politics for people without legal residence within the network, which does not mean that there is an adversarial relationship. Organisations that focus on undocumented migrants are left in their autonomy and are not excluded from further cooperation with other target groups (refugees and asylum seekers—thus, migrants that have some form of legal residence). Moreover, the lack of an overarching local framework does not prevent local actors from informally reaching out to each other, for instance, in the form of referrals to each other's services or exchanging information about specific individual cases. In fact, we found several instances of CSOs testifying that civil servants informally refer clients to the CSOs in order to get material or social support that local governments could not provide. The second strategy consists of the development of a joint policy by local governments and CSOs. This strategy arises because the local government is confronted with a complex local reality on the basis of its own services, but also because it is in a network where it is confronted with questions from organisations. Such a strategy is built on both pragmatic concerns and conscious political choices. Nowhere do we see this second strategy fully developed, but we believe that there is a certain impetus for further development of this strategy in Ghent.

In Sint-Niklaas, we find the first pragmatic strategy—especially in the relationship between the local government and VLOS, a local organisation with a history of working with (undocumented) migrants for more than 20 years. The differing vision between the two actors does, however, create ever-present friction. For example, VLOS is asking the local authorities to set up a local shelter for undocumented migrants, asking the city to provide the infrastructure while VLOS proposed organising individual guidance and support services. For the time being, the local government has not taken up this proposal, which does not mean, however, that it does not have a working relationship with the VLOS: it provides limited financial support for its social grocer, VLOS is a permanent member of the local network on refugee policies, and at the administrative level, there is a lot of informal contact with VLOS volunteers regarding concrete cases or specific questions (e.g., what to do with the weekly municipal garbage pickup for undocumented migrants). This first strategy also sets the tone in Mechelen. The local specificity of the semi-governmental CSO Support Centre probably

plays a role in this: they have been involved in the implementation of local policies for this target group for a long time. For instance, a lot of emphasis is placed on material emergency aid (food, clothing), psychosocial counselling and acute emergency shelter in the context of voluntary return. At the same time, both local administrators and the Support Centre emphasise the set 'realistic expectations' for this target group, a vision that guides their pragmatic approach. Where necessary, services of other organisations are also called in via separate agreements (e.g., the CAW provides short-term emergency shelter) or by contracting out services of other CSOs (e.g., the project on psychological counselling by Solentra). In Ghent, the first strategy is combined with the second strategy. In addition to the consultations within the framework of the Taskforce, a separate steering group was formed to explore the feasibility of specific local politics concerning undocumented migrants. This is still an early phase of the second strategy, because there is no formally acknowledged political decision yet and because the steering group consists mostly of politicians and civil servants (including from the agency In-Ghent), with the CAW as the only CSO involved. To develop their position, the actors use the experience of their own services (such as the 'learning network of undocumented migrants' of the agency In-Gent and the local shelter of the urban shelter initiative'), but they could also learn from their partnership with the CAW in the context of providing emergency shelters and health-and-wellbeing services. This strategy of developing a local political framework is also guided by the concern to set realistic expectations for people without legal residence. So far, respondents have been working on a joint strategy for providing shelter and social services and on extending participation in public services (e.g., participation in holiday activities provided by local government).

The abovementioned strategies operate at the level of the network, but politicisation also takes place at the level of the interaction between individual organisations and local government. CSOs working with migrants operate in an ever-changing environment, which impacts their position and their strategies. An illustration of this is the organisations VLOS (Sint-Niklaas) and Support Centre (Mechelen), who both have experienced changing relationships with the local government. Both organisations were initially formed in some kind of partnership with the local government at the end of the 1990s, a time with fewer specific local services for migrants and refugees. VLOS started from a network of local actors in civil society that had close ties with local government, who agreed to lend infrastructure for providing shelter and offered political support for VLOS to establish working interactions with local social services. The Support Centre was initiated by the local government, from the council of the OCMW, although it was formally registered as an autonomous nonprofit. Both actors, VLOS and Support Centre, were local pioneers who helped to shape the local field, offering a generalist service for migrants. Nowadays, both actors have evolved to a more autonomous position from local

government, especially VLOS (which receives little local funding). The Support Centre still has an active working relationship with local government, but its board consists of actors from local civil society, and it has to renew its contract with local government every five years. Nowadays, both these actors offer a more specialised service for people without legal residence (VLOS almost exclusively works with undocumented migrants), which creates a certain distance from local government. One of the contributing factors for this evolution might be the arrival of other actors in the local field (including governmental actors) who work with refugees and migrants and who contribute to both VLOS and SA&M gradually becoming more focused on a target group that in their view is not or not sufficiently supported by the various authorities.

6.6.6 Boundary spanning

Boundary spanning refers to how actors in the network proactively transcend the boundaries between the organisations in the network. It can involve actors from the local government or civil society. Our cases confirm the importance of boundary spanning in making these networks work—even more so, at crucial points boundary spanners bring movement into the network. Here we will provide three illustrations, each of which describes a particular type of boundary spanning in their own way.

a. The coordinator

This form of boundary spanning is the most obvious, given the nature of these networks (coordinating services). In Mechelen, it is mainly administrative coordination, with monthly feedback to the College of Aldermen. In Ghent and Sint-Niklaas, politicians are also involved, either directly or through their political cabinets. These structures provide a clear arena where government and civil society meet: in Ghent, they are working groups and plenary meetings; in Sint-Niklaas and Mechelen they are steering groups with the core actors.

In Ghent, we saw shared coordination between an official administrative coordinator and a political representative from the cabinet of the aldermen. These coordinators were not only active within their arenas (attending, preparing, following up), but they were also filling gaps or providing linkages where they considered it necessary. For instance, the administrative coordinator took on the request of a newly formed CSO (Refu Interim) in search of financial support by searching for support with other departments (i.e., the Alderman of Culture).

b. The translator

It is not always easy for new organisations to gain access to local government. This access does not necessarily involve financial support; sometimes it is about getting to know each other in a phase prior to that. We saw two cases of how new initiatives found access to local

government thanks to well-known actors from the local civil society. In one case—Heart for Refugees—contact with local government was facilitated by an actor from CSO who had already established a relationship of trust with local government. In Mechelen, we saw how the Asylum & Migration Support Centre presented the services of another CSO—Solentra—that was little-known to the local government at the time. In the case of *Hart voor Vluchtelingen* (Heart for Refugees), it is rather a matter of a translation between the language of policy and the motivations of the newcomers. In the case of Solentra, the translation occurred between the needs of the local policy in terms of the specific services provided by Solentra and the at the time not yet established particular expertise of Solentra.

c. The multitalented wanderer

This is a type of boundary spanner in which a local actor actively alternates between positions in civil society and local government. In one of our cases, we saw the remarkable trajectory of such a local actor: arriving as a refugee, quickly becoming active in the local civil society (established a cultural organisation for newcomers), this actor was later hired by the local government as a civil servant for refugee work. Years later, this actor is now active again in civil society, this time at a regional level, setting up and supervising specific projects for asylum seekers and refugees. This type of boundary spanning is important because, in every position, new connections between civil society and government can arise. A good example of this is how this specific actor, as a civil servant, took the initiative to form a local network of frontline workers which served as a structural exchange between frontline workers in both government and civil society.

6.6.7 Networks as temporary institutional layers

Each local network functions within a context of existing interactions between CSOs and local government. In fact, as we have seen, these networks started mostly by local governments engaging with CSOs that were already known. Theoretically, trust is a typical characteristic of networks, and we see this also in our cases. Relationships of trust certainly work at a micro-level (between people in the network), but also in a more structural way: in each of these networks we see the local governments in the first instance bringing together organisations with whom they already have a working relationship. New organisations only join at a later stage, often actively working on mutual acquaintance with informal contacts. Given the sense of urgency in the specific problem of refugee work, this entry of new organisations could be relatively quick (see e.g., Welcome in Mechelen or Olive Tree in Ghent).

Our case study shows that the networks do not replace the normal operations of local government. Instead, network strategies are used to temporarily bridge compartmentalisation of services and departments: coordinators connect services, consultative platforms are set up, and political decisions are made quicker. A key role is played by the boundary spanners who bridge these boundaries between services and organisations. Formal agreements remain important for these networks: when CSOs engage in providing subsidised services, this is formalised in a contract. In purely theoretical terms, these are NPM-style instruments: the local government outsources services to civil society, which have to provide certain services. Yet, the reality is more nuanced: often, these are agreements that formalise the trust that has been built up and not contracts with strict performance criteria. This does not mean that these contracts have no meaning; despite a certain level of trust, there exists some level of anxiety when negotiating the possible renewal of the contract—even with established partners.

In addition, we see how supralocal actors have an impact on the local context, adding to the institutional complexity. The federal policy for providing shelter is to a large extent built on NPM-style third-party contracting, managed by a governmental agency, yet it most often relies on the same partner (the Red Cross). Local authorities then engage in their own interaction with these shelters: we saw in each of these networks how the Red Cross (Mechelen, Sint-Niklaas) and even the for-profit G4S Care (Ghent) were key actors in the local networks. For its part, the Flemish government has also established its own governmental agency (Agency on Integration), which has incorporated a large part of the regional and local civil society. In practice, this has led to a Flemish government agency that is experienced as disconnected from the local needs and concerns. At the same time, we see that In-Ghent, the integration agency of the city of Ghent (which is equally NPM-style), is involved in many areas in the local civil society and active in the local network.

6.7 Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter we have presented a case study of local governance networks, asking how these networks take on wicked problems in the context of neocorporatist institutions. We started from the observation in the previous chapter that the relations between local government and local civil society seem to be characterised by mutual distance: a civil society that has its own mission and activities, and local governments that pursue their own goals and policies. This chapter follows up on that conclusion by explicitly focusing on instances of collaboration between local government and CSOs, thereby not focusing on whether there has been a general shift towards more governance but instead asking how governance

networks work in those cases where they can be identified. To find examples of such networks, we focused on how three Flemish cities dealt with the wicked problem of the so-called asylum crisis of 2015–2016. The case study in this chapter identifies three local networks where local government and civil society engaged in local networks. Using these three cases, we examined some of the key issues of local governance networks, focusing on issues of boundary spanning, political leadership and the impact of networks on the political dimension of migration. This means that our case study is limited in its empirical scope, and is instead meant to be an exploration of the connection between the network paradigm and the traditional institutions of governance identified in this dissertation.

How can we understand these networks in terms of the questions regarding governance that we posed in the second chapter of this dissertation? There, we stated that analysis of network governance has to deal with three issues: acknowledge the connection of networks with the historical positions and interactions of government and civil society; observe the linkages between networks and issues of marketisation; and the possible depoliticising impact of networks on social issues. Our case study gives us the chance to look at some more nuanced theoretical arguments. We will discuss our results in light of these issues.

6.7.1 Local networks and the institutional mix

This first issue concerns the connection of networks and the institutional linkages between government and civil society. A key question asked regarding our cases corresponds to other research on the position of local networks in the context of traditional neocorporatist exchange: “(...) can platforms and networks become sustainable in the face of established, traditional forms of corporatist mediation and trends towards privatization of public tasks handed over to agencies and subcontractors?” (Schmid, Evers, & Mildemberger, 2019: 173). We have seen how the networks in our cases were all initiated by building on existing interactions between local government and civil society. The networks were in the first place new platforms of coordination, bundling and sometimes expanding existing public services. Secondly, they consisted of arenas in which information was shared, possible ideas for local policies were collected, and services and initiatives were coordinated. Thirdly, we saw how new organisations in two networks were quickly integrated within the network and their services incorporated in the traditional negotiation-based institutions, including some form of policy negotiations and political exchange, both formal and informal. Our case study shows how local networks function as additional layers on top of the existing operations of local government and civil society.

Because of the relatively short term of the networks in our case study, a longer-term historical analysis of the network is not possible. However, separate from the active local networks, we have found how some organisations have shifted position over the last 20 years. Indeed, although we have only discussed this in more depth for two specific CSOs, the shift from close interaction with local government to a more distanced and even almost mutually disconnected approach illustrates how these networks build on historically established relations between government and CSOs.

These conclusions should, however, not be understood as saying that the new is only an iteration of the old. In fact, we would argue that the perceived crisis served as a triggering event (Vanhellemont, 2016) to set up patterns of interactions, layered on top of existing interactions, which might have their own specific effect on local governance. In fact, in one case, the local government has been carefully examining the possibility of developing a network-based local politics for people without legal residence, as well as starting to experiment with new longer-term local networks for dealing with the issues of migration and affordable housing. In another city, a local network of frontline workers served as inspiration for the current crisis networks, although it is unclear whether this frontline network will be reinstated after the crisis. The third city has learned to quickly re-assemble the local network with the opening of a new shelter for asylum seekers. In all instances, a crucial contribution to these local networks is the work of boundary spanners in both local government and civil society: we argue how politicians, administrators as well as local actors in CSOs cross their organisational boundaries. Furthermore, the relationship between politicians and civil servants is important for the dynamics of these local networks. The case study shows how a mutually stimulating relationship can arise between politicians and civil servants. We see in each case that public officials (aldermen, mayor) take the initiative, involving civil society or other services. If politicians inspire and give room to act, civil servants can work creatively. Sint-Niklaas is certainly illustrative here, as we saw how a refugee consultation was created in this way, which years later formed the basis for the current consultation platform. In Ghent, we saw how coordination was shared between a local administrator and a member of the political cabinet. Indeed, civil servants actively form the network, which in turn can create a political dynamic in the network. Moreover, in our cases, we see how CSOs are also important here, how they confront local governments with an outspoken political vision and concrete complex questions, how they bring civil servants and politicians into direct contact with new organisations in the field, how these new organisations, in turn, challenge the existing thought processes. This means that we cannot understand political-administrative relations without taking the relationship with civil society into account.

6.7.2 Local networks and New Public Management

Second, while we have not found these networks to spur the marketisation of the public services for refugees and asylum seekers, NPM is not absent entirely. The clearest examples are found on the impact of the supralocal level, where the federal and Flemish government have established autonomous agencies to implement policies on shelter and integration. Moreover, the federal agency responsible for providing shelters works with NPM-style contracting out of services, including to the for-profit G4S Care. At the local level, we also found many examples of (sub)contracting of services, as well as the frequent occurrence of project-based services that are tied to temporary funding sources. However, following what we have found in other chapters of this dissertation, this NPM-style governance is layered on top of the existing institutional frameworks, creating a mix of institutions with their own internal tensions. The local governance networks are hybrid constructions where traditional institutions are intertwined with these NPM-style elements, connecting both local and supralocal institutions in a localised mix.

6.7.3 Local networks and (de)politicisation

The political position of migrants is a complex issue concerning many dimensions, ranging from residence status to language, culture and leisure, access to decent affordable housing and sustainable employment. The position of undocumented migrants is the most politicised element we encountered in our case studies and offers a good insight into how local governance networks deal with politicised issues. Our findings show how a pragmatic approach dominates the approach in the local networks. We also saw that the relationship between organisations and governments evolves and with it, how CSOs behave in a politicising or non-politicising way. Moreover, we see that many organisations, including new initiatives, become to some extent institutionalised in the network: their activities become part of the local policy institutions. One issue at play here could be the overarching concern of humanist ideals in pursuit of emergency aid, without specific longer-term or structural concerns. Moreover, the question is whether this institutionalisation leads to organisations adopting depoliticised strategies. Unfortunately, based on our research, and partly due to the pragmatic attitude and the short term within which these networks were active, we cannot add much to the theoretical argument. However, we do believe that the case in Ghent illustrates how distinct local politics could possibly form, starting from pragmatic concerns. Here, local actors who have established a long working relationship, are exploring how to move from an aid perspective for undocumented migrants to an integrated local approach.

6.7.4 The (meta)governance of local governance networks?

The question arises whether it is possible to stimulate these types of local governance networks and whether the formation of local governance networks should be pursued as a political strategy. This last issue is hard to assess from our research since it was never meant as an evaluation of the success or performance of the network outcomes. In fact, during our interviews, we found that most, yet not all, respondents (especially not those working with migrants in the most precarious positions, e.g., undocumented migrants) were genuinely positive about the initiative. For some, these networks do not offer solutions for some of the most pressing issues: the rights of undocumented migrants, the condition of the housing market for migrants and refugees, or the discrimination in the labour market. Without structural local and supralocal changes in these conditions, these local networks might only be working in the margins, despite their contribution to the local services available to newly arrived migrants. Moreover, at times, the argument was made that these networks in some way shift responsibility towards civil society that, while highly motivated, can become overwhelmed. Thus, while the inclusion in the political process is appreciated by most, a more cautious undertone is certainly present, one that is aware of the local limitations, the political dissensus and the position of CSOs.

We then, finally, come to the question of metagovernance, as in the governance of local governance networks. From this chapter, it is clear that the wicked complexity of these local networks is quite vast: a range of actors and institutions at the local, (sub)national and international level as well as a range of structural conditions impacting the lives of migrants and refugees. If the formation of local governance networks were to be incentivised, a careful balance must be sought between the need for structured coordination and constructing a space to act politically, as well as a balance between the needs of migrants with the services provided by governments, established CSOs and newly emerging citizens' initiatives. Where should such a metagovernor exist, and what should be its object of concern? As we have discussed in chapter 2, metagovernance literature emphasises that the default governance modes of metagovernance are coordination, persuasion, and—as Davies (2014a) added—coercion. Our case study has shown that at the local level, distinct policies can be formed, and steps towards a distinct local political space are possible. Yet, local governance can only to a limited extent persuade or influence the impact of supralocal actors and institutions active in the cities. In the federal Belgian state, while not the object of our research, it seems that the governance of migration governance includes some shared principles (e.g., the use of NPM-style agencies and contracting). Yet, linking these institutions to the local networks seems to be poorly conceived (e.g., the role of the integration agency). Metagovernance would have to

coordinate these (sub)national institutions with the specific local institutions and needs, which in turn can generate new effects, see how local actors shifted their activities from refugees (legal residence) towards undocumented migrants (without legal residence) following changed regulations and arrival of governmental actors. In our case studies, we have observed the mechanism of using networks to establish new (even if temporary) links between existing institutions. While we are unclear about how such a network approach would work on the (sub)national level, we argue that using supralocal networks to link existing institutions can inspire the step towards metagovernance: providing a representative structure to include key actors, while remaining open to quickly include new actors and initiatives. Of course, such a reform would require a public debate on the needs of improving the living conditions of migrants (asylum seekers and refugees as well as undocumented migrants) in Flemish cities.

6.8 Appendix to chapter 6

6.8.1 Members of the Ghent network

STEERING COMMITTEE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Administrative steering committee (department heads)

- Department of Living Together, Wellbeing and Health
 - including the administrative coordinator of the network (administrator of the (sub)department of Wellbeing and Equal Opportunities)
- Department of Education, Upbringing and Youth
- Social Services - Department of General Social Services

WORKING GROUP 'SHELTER'

Local Government	Civil Society
City Asylum Services Public Centre for Social Welfare Facility Management City Shelter Initiative (SOI) In-Ghent (govt. agency)	SeSo vzw (Socialist Solidarity) Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen (partially) Association of Ghent Mosques (at the start) Diocese Ghent (at the beginning)
Other government	Private actor (for-profit)
Fedasil (federal agency)	G4S Care (temporary shelter Reno)

WORKING GROUP 'VOLUNTEERING AND AWARENESS'

Local Government
Solidarity Ghent (public platform for volunteering) Volunteering Platform city of Ghent Health-and-Wellbeing Consultation Platform

WORKING GROUP 'INTEGRATION'

Integration: Group Housing

Local Government	Civil Society
City Shelter Initiative (SOI) Department of Housing Public Centre for Social Welfare In-Ghent (agency)	SeSO vzw Centre for General Wellbeing (CAW) Renters' Association Heart for Refugees Caritas International
	Private actor (for-profit)
	G4S Care (temporary shelter Reno)

Integration: Group Work: Workplace Refugees Ghent (ESF project)

Local Government
City of Ghent: City at Work vzw Public Centre for Social Welfare In-Ghent (<i>agency</i>)
Other Government
Flemish Labour Market Agency

Integration: Group Leisure

Local Government	Civil Society
Dept. of Culture Dept. of Sports Volunteering platform Volunteering platform city of Ghent	VZW Jong: project NIEMO, Mind-Spring Junior NTGent → Time-Out Critical Mass Gent JES vzw Dine With Us Netwerk Planeet Gent (platform youth organisations) Cirq vzw → Refu Interim

Integration: Group Social Relations

Local Government	Civil Society
In-Ghent Volunteers for support in search for housing	CAW Vormingplus (adult formation and education) Heart for Refugees: The Olive Tree

Integration: Group Education

Local Government
Education Centre city of Ghent

Integration: Group Health

Local Government	Civil Society
In-Ghent: AMIF-project Public Centre for Social Welfare In-Ghent: Mind-Spring Junior	Centre for Mental Health Eclipse
Local Health Consultation Platform for Asylum Seekers and Other Precarious Groups (part of the local advisory council for health)	

Integration: Group Language

Local Government	Civil Society
In-Ghent	Vormingplus, Perspectief (adult education) Language café Macharius Kras vzw

6.8.2 Members of the Sint-Niklaas network

Local Government

- **Politicians**
 - o Mayor
 - o Councillor of Wellbeing, Education, Integration
 - o Chairman of Public Centre for Social Welfare (PCSW)
- **Administrators**
 - o Joint Cluster of Wellbeing in City and PCSW (= PCSW, team integration and refugee worker, team diversity, team society and prevention, municipal primary education, rent and housing support services)
 - o Department Population (team foreigners)
 - o Department of Housing
 - o Department for Accompanying Education Policy

Civil Society

- Red Cross (manages shelter by order of Fedasil)
- Centre for General Wellbeing (CAW)
- Refugee Reception Sint-Niklaas vzw (VLOS)

Flemish Government (agencies)

- Flemish Agency for Integration (AGII)
- Flemish Labour Market Agency (VDAB)

6.8.3 Members of the Mechelen network

Local Government

- Administrators
 - o Social House (PCSW): manager, social services
 - o Dept. of Society
 - o Dept. of Housing
 - o Dept. of Implementation Services / Emergency Planning
 - o Dept. of Marketing and Communication
 - o Operational coordinator refugee shelter (from Oct. 3rd, 2016)
- Police (from Oct. 3rd, 2016)
- Monthly reporting to Council of Mayors and City Councillors and to the Special Committee on General Policy (operational management of PSCW)

Civil Society

- Centre for General Wellbeing (CAW)
- Emmaüs vzw (health-and-wellbeing services)
- Local Support Centre for Asylum and Migrations (Steunpunt Asiel & Migratie vzw)
- Red Cross (manages shelter by order of Fedasil) (from Oct. 3rd, 2016)
- Welcome in Mechelen (from June 12th, 2017)

Flemish Government (agencies)

- Flemish Agency for Integration (AGII)
- Child and Family (when needed)

7 Governance as cumulative change: conclusion & reflections

This dissertation started from the insight proposed in academic literature that a decline of traditional structures and increased functional differentiation have impacted the relationship between government and civil society. This fundamental societal change has contributed to the growing importance of *alternative governance paradigms*, such as New Public Management and New Public Governance. We identified the relationship between government and civil society in Flanders as one that has been shaped by the neocorporatist institutional exchange. From this observation follows the leading research question of this dissertation: *to what extent have evolutions in governance impacted (or destabilised) the traditional institutional exchange between government and civil society organisations?* The answer to this question can, as we have done throughout the preceding chapters, be framed in broad terms as a process of *institutional layering*: we can identify some forms of institutional change, where new institutional elements seem to operate 'on top of' or 'next to' the existing neocorporatist institutional framework. We have examined the theoretical underpinning of the literature on governance in the second chapter, and pursued an empirical research agenda across four chapters which focused on Flanders.

This chapter has three goals. One, to briefly summarize the main arguments of the four empirical chapters. Two, to present some implications for policy makers and professionals. Three, to reflect back on our research and think through some of the implications of our findings.

7.1 Synopsis of the empirical research

7.1.1 Empirical scope and limitations

Our research is built on both quantitative and qualitative data. Thanks to the joint efforts of the researchers in the CSI Flanders research consortium, we were able to do survey research using self-constructed databases of CSOs: the first of CSOs active at the regional level in Flanders, the second of local CSOs in 14 municipalities across Flanders. Both sets have their limitations, as we have discussed in chapters 3 and 5. The analyses on these datasets and survey results were focused on comparing sectors (chapter 3) or groups (chapter 5) according to several key characteristics. Given the limitations discussed in both chapters, we believe

these datasets to be robust and present a wide view on a broad set of CSOs in Flanders at different levels.

For the chapter on WISE and local governance networks, we have combined data from this survey with qualitative data in the form of documents and interviews. Here, we used an interpretative approach. However, these qualitative chapters are limited in their presentation: they devote a lot of space to the results of the interpretative process (the description of the cases, findings and conclusions), without giving the actual interview passages the space needed to illustrate the interpretative process itself. Therefore, we thought it useful to include some reflections on that process here. In chapter four, we focused on the impact of several aspects of recent legislative reform. Our interviews were structured around these topics, as well as our analysis in which we grouped the relevant passages together. In order to grasp the various organisational strategies, we assigned these to the various categories proposed in Table 14. The descriptions the reader finds in chapter 4 is built on this structure, thus using two interpretative dimensions: what is the pre-defined topic at hand, what type of response strategy is at play here? The first dimension is more directly clear (does the passage speak of 'competition' or 'reintegration', for example). The second dimension required us to decide whether the strategies being discussed could be classified as 'goals' or 'means', and under which category of response strategies they should be included. In chapter six, we used a similar method of data gathering and analyses, but with different structures. First, a timeline served as a tool to structure the case study and its construction was always part of the interview: each respondent had the opportunity to contribute to the timeline. Second, a list of topics was used, as indicated in the chapters, which again was used to categorise passages. Thus, again, interpretative choices had to be made. A good example concerns the interpretation of contractual agreements or competitively funded projects for CSOs. Theoretically, these are NPM-style instruments: a local or regional government is outsourcing services. However, it is important *how* these instruments are at work in their context: in certain cases we found that often these instruments 'formalise' a previously constructed relationship. Sometimes there was a long-standing trust between actors, while in other cases trust was made possible through the action of already trusted mediators. Contracts or formal agreements, in these cases, are 'mixed': they still contain elements of competition (e.g. competing for regional funds), yet are built on a mutual understanding and exchange of ideas (e.g. both actors cooperate to compete for funding).

We acknowledge the limited presentation of our qualitative data in this sense. We have done our best to ensure that these choices are reflected in the description of our findings, and hope that despite these limitations the reader can follow our reasoning.

7.1.2 The marginal and non-trivial position of NPM in Flanders.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of our survey research in three sectors of civil society in Flanders (sociocultural associations, health and wellbeing, and the social economy), dealing with the relationship between CSOs and the Flemish government. Here our main focus was to *empirically explore to what extent the neo-corporatist relationship between government and CSOs has been impacted by NPM-style reforms.*

In sum, this chapter does not find a destabilization of the neo-corporatist institutions, understood here as the stabilised exchange between government and CSOs. We argue that our findings show how NPM enters the neocorporatist framework through *institutional layering*, in which some 'new' elements are added to the institutional framework. Negotiation-based agreements still form the core of the institutional framework, while market-type elements can be found in specific instances (such as the nature of public funding). These NPM-style elements can be considered *marginal* (since they do not necessarily displace negotiation-based exchange), but *not trivial*. For instance, public funding remains a crucial part of the income sources for CSOs, thus not changing its position, yet the importance of *competitive public funding* shows the NPM-type nature of a large share of the public funding. Furthermore, we argue that this institutional layering might lead to lower institutional coherence (old logics conflicting with new logics), which could affect the stability of the institutional exchange.

Importantly, the scope in this chapter was intentionally broad: we included a wide range of organisations in a broad population of organisations. Even within this broad scope we have identified important differences between three domains of CSOs. Indeed, we must emphasize that in order to understand the impact of institutional layering, research should not only contextualize NPM-style reforms between countries or regions, but should also focus on the differences between sectors of CSOs within countries. Additionally, the marginal impact of NPM-style institutions in this overall view does not exclude more deeply layered changes in specific policy sectors or sectoral clusters.

7.1.3 Institutional layering: organisational strategies

Chapter 4 builds on the findings of the previous chapter, and presents a case study on Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) to focus on a sector with the most likely case of New Public Management. WISEs are hybrid organisations that operate with more market-like characteristics compared to the other two sectors in our research. The research question in this chapter is *what organizational strategies are used by WISEs to navigate NPM-style reforms in the Flemish neo-corporatist context?* Additionally, we looked at how the current

legislative framework was formed through the exchange between government and peak associations.

Our case study is an illustration of institutional layering. By looking at both the negotiated policy process as well as the organisational manoeuvring by the WISEs, we showed how elements of NPM are inserted into the neocorporatist exchange that still forms the core of the institutional framework. Here, some of the key NPM-style changes (such as the emphasis on 'reintegration' and the standardised eligibility processes) directly impact how these WISEs manage the very disadvantaged individuals they are supporting. At the same time, we showed the wide range of active strategies pursued by these organisations in dealing with the impact of these reforms.

Crucially, we have also shown how not all of the NPM-style institutional changes are being 'imposed' on civil society by governmental decisions. Some of the changes are built on shared beliefs in certain policy goals and management strategies (e.g. 'objective' indicators for eligibility, the use of management tools). Furthermore, this chapter also highlights the importance of strategic networks in the sector, enabling organisations to handle the political and economic expectations in their environment.

Overall, this chapter illustrates the institutional layering at work through a hybrid coexistence of tight coupling in the policy process, strategic interorganisational networks, administrative oversight and market-type management and market-based competitive coping strategies. What is less clear, is whether this means that there has been a qualitative shift in market-type governance (towards 'more' market). We see possibilities in the future for both internal and external changes. Internally, there is the widely shared self-observation as 'entrepreneurs' that rely on 'management tools' to best pursue their social goals. Externally, in terms of governmental expectations, the foundation has been laid to strengthen the 'active labour market' policies.

7.1.4 The local level: each in their own lane?

Chapter 5 turns to CSOs across 14 cities and municipalities in Flanders, using a combination of quantitative data and focus groups. The goal here is to empirically describe the institutional relationships between local CSOs and their local governments, as well as explore to what extent new forms of CSOs might be active in smaller, non-metropolitan municipalities. While not representative for the whole of Flanders, this chapter identifies key trends and differences that are important to the discussion on local civil society and local governance within our

sample framework. Overall, we found little evidence of active political exchange between local CSOs and local governments.

Our findings contribute to the debate on some key issues concerning local governance. Some authors have argued that local civil society has an important role to play in dealing with 'wicked problems'. Brandsen et al. (2015) have argued that local governments can play a role in activating civil society, even "manufacturing (...) a new civil society" (2015: 5). Our research points out two important obstacles for such a strategy. First, if local civil society is indeed more concerned with social capital than wicked issues, local governments that take initiative might end up 'flogging a dead horse' (Bekkers & Tummers, 2018: 211). At the same time, our findings show that some associations that work with people at the margins of society (ethnic-cultural minorities and people experiencing poverty) seem to be more attuned to political issues. The other obstacle concerns the possible limitations in governmental capacity. During our focus groups, some local administrators and politicians who were looking to initiate a more dynamic relationship with civil society were well aware of their own limitations and lack of knowledge.

7.1.5 Local Governance Networks at work

Chapter 6 complements the previous chapter on local governance by asking the question *that if governance networks occur in Flemish cities, how do they function and what is their impact on CSOs and local government*. It presents a case study of three local governance networks in three cities, providing shelter and integration services for asylum seekers and refugees in light of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015-2016. International literature suggests that local actors can take up an active role in this domain, despite the authority and policies of the central government regulating migration and integration. Our case study is limited in its empirical scope, and is instead meant as an exploration of the connection between the network paradigm and the traditional institutions of governance identified in this dissertation.

Our case study shows how local networks function as additional layers on top of the existing operations of local government and civil society. The networks in our cases were all initiated by building on existing interactions between local government and civil society. They were first and foremost new platforms of coordination, bundling and sometimes expanding existing public services. In some cases, new organisations were quickly integrated in the network, and their services incorporated in the traditional negotiation-based institutions.

As for the impact of NPM in these cases, while we have not found these networks to spur the marketization of the public services for refugees and asylum seekers, NPM is not absent entirely — specifically in the form of contracting, the presence of governmental agencies, as well as many project-based services. Again, following what we have found in other chapters, this NPM-style governance is layered on top of the existing institutional frameworks, creating a mix of institutions with its own internal tensions.

7.2 Implications for policy makers and professionals

Our research contains several insights into the various relationships between governments and civil society organisations. From these insights, we propose the following proposals for policy makers and CSO professionals.

7.2.1 Adapt public funding structures to the envisioned relationship (and not vice versa)

Policy makers should use competitive project-based funding for experimental project-based activities, not as a means of replacing structural funding. The large share of increased project-funding, identified in chapter 3, contains the risk of undermining long-term work for many CSOs. Our research has shown how civil society organisations often combine various roles, providing (semi)public services, striving for social change, advocating for certain (public) interests, as well as supporting communities and social networks. This multifunctional nature of CSOs comes under pressure when public funding shifts towards competitive funding types. At the end of chapter 3 we wrote that it is difficult to determine, within the limits of our methodology and data, whether competitive public funding is indeed replacing the more partnership-based structural funding between CSOs and governments in Flanders. Yet, we also argued how this marginal increase in competitive funding can be understood as signs of an institutional shift, which can result in far reaching changes: competition at the expense of socially oriented goals, loss of organisational autonomy due to increased market orientation, or increased formalization and professionalization at the expense of voluntary engagement.

7.2.2 Local governance networks means more government, not less

Local policy makers, especially in the field of integration (as identified in chapter 6) are increasingly regarded as ‘directors’ (*regisseurs*) of local governance networks. What this entails is often unclear, many times it involved improvisation by local actors within vague and

complex supra-local regulatory frameworks (regional, federal and European). These types of networks are often regarded as a way of organising local services that local government alone cannot provide. We discussed in chapter 2 how this idea is one of the driving forces behind the idea of governance. On the local level this might be misunderstood as a way of *local governmental retreat*: resources and capacities are provided by civil society and market actors, and local governments should only provide administrative and regulatory support. However, as chapter 6 shows, building these local networks requires specific capacities, funding and support, for both governmental and non-governmental actors. We identified several aspects with which local governments need to engage: political leadership, boundary spanning, integration of institutional processes (e.g. bureaucracy and networks), as well as handling (highly) politicised issues with a diverse set of actors and organisations in civil society.

7.2.3 Stimulating new form of civil society

We concluded chapter 5 by stating that many local CSOs seem concerned with issues of social capital, much less with political issues. We also suggested that local governments who are willing to engage with politicised issues might encounter an unmotivated local civil society: “they could possibly end up ‘flogging a dead horse’” (see p. 140). Luckily, we also found how CSOs that work with people in precarious situations (e.g. people in poverty, migrants) value political action as high as their social roles. Maybe there much to learn from these organisations on how to construct a dynamic local governance arrangement. Moreover, in chapter 6 we identified local networks in which CSOs not only worked together with local government but also energised local activities and policies. More work should be done to identify under what conditions these types of networks can contribute to vibrant local governance arrangements.

7.2.4 Civil society networking

Yes, another research that stresses the importance of working in networks. It must be one of the most used ‘insights’ shared in the world of CSOs, yet we cannot ignore it. However tiresome it can be to hear this over and over again, the importance of both organisational and interpersonal networks is clear. Especially in chapter 4 and 6 we have identified the crucial role of networking in the way CSOs can navigate their increasingly complex environments. In chapter 4, organisational networks were instrumental in creating impact on political regulations, buffering the impact of increased competition and exchanging institutional resources. In chapter 6, local networks provided access to local policy makers for newly formed citizens’ initiatives, and formed a means for CSOs to coordinate the implementation of

scarce public resources. Additionally, both these chapters highlighted the importance of personal and (semi)formal networks between key actors in governance networks. We saw how such connections can help to establish trust in a situation of high pressure ('refugee crisis'), or deal with regulatory uncertainty (e.g in the case of WISE's reform of eligibility and reintegration). Thus, while it might seem time-consuming to set up meetings, invite actors, organise events, discuss regulations, etc., these very specific activities provide a crucial link in the way a CSO can manage its environment.

7.3 Putting governance in its place

Governance literature, fundamentally, is a collection of various attempts to rethink the possibilities of *steering* society, *either by* government through its wide variety of instruments (from persuasion to coercion) *or by* linking multiple institutional actors (government, firms, CSOs, universities, ...) across different social spheres (politics, economy, civil society, science, education...). Functional differentiation puts considerable strain on the possibilities of social steering: how to steer a society in which various complex social spheres all interact autonomously in each other's environment?

Neocorporatism (temporarily) 'solved' this issue through hierarchically organized peak associations which operate as mediators between the different social spheres, linking various social functions in ordered structures. Government remains a crucial component in this arrangement, being a key arena for organising institutional exchange. While most typically associated with the connection between the political and economic sphere, this stable exchange system can thus also be understood in a wider sense of dealing with functional differentiation through a stabilised exchange system between government and other social actors. From the 1970s onwards, with the so-called crisis of the welfare state, the qualities of governmental steering capacity have been increasingly criticized, and with it the neocorporatist system as well. They have been challenged by new governance paradigms. The umbrella term New Public Management captures a widely shared belief in the logic of the market as a unifying principle of societal steering. Other strains of theory offer different analyses, seeing social steering in the form of network governance, as well as other more hybrid models of governance, in which government becomes a still crucial yet no longer central institutional actor in the process of steering society.

It is from this position that our research question should be understood when we ask to what extent evolutions in governance have impacted or destabilised the neocorporatist institutional

exchange between government and civil society organisations. The brief answer, as stated at the start of this chapter, is that we can identify some forms of institutional change, most notably some element of NPM as well as different forms of network-type steering — yet these new institutions seem to be layered on top of or next to the existing neocorporatist institutional framework. Crucially, while these emerge from within already existing social structures they have the potential to undermine the existing framework. Is this what we are seeing in our research? And what does this mean for the role of government and civil society?

Researchers have to make choices. For instance, we have not examined the privatisation of public services in some parts of the Flemish health and wellbeing sector. We have also not examined what could drive a government to overtake services once offered by CSOs and turn them into government-led public services, which happens on both the local level (e.g. some youth services) and central level (e.g. with the *Vlaamse Agentschap voor Integratie en Inburgering*, a governmental agency established to incorporate the then-existing CSO-led integration services for migrants and refugees). Thus, the scope of the research in this dissertation is at once wide and limited. It is wide, because we were able to include a diverse range of CSOs, and have analysed the relationship between governments and CSOs from different perspectives and through different methodologies. At the same time, our scope is limited, in that we have selected specific sectors and organisations, and could only focus on specific topics and dynamics. Therefore, this would be our first call for further research: to continue the research on how alternative governance paradigms are impacting the neocorporatist exchange. One interesting research topic would be to examine to what extent these dynamics of privatization and agencification are indications of a shift towards more neoliberal governance of public services? Some might argue that in both instances governmental control over the shift towards more market and more government are examples of using market-based instruments to create new forms of control and exclusion.

Coming back to our own findings, are we then seeing the emergence of alternative institutions from within the neocorporatist framework? The core of the problem is that both governance and neocorporatism are responses to a functionally differentiated society that cannot be hierarchically organised: there is no leading logic under which the whole of society can function. The merit of neocorporatism was that it briefly succeeded in providing an institutional framework to link different parts of society. The instances of institutional layering that we have pointed out in our research are, according to some authors, unavoidable: it seems that the train has left the station. More precisely, we were already on this train when the neocorporatist frameworks was at its heyday. Or as Poul F. Kjaer put it: “the immediate dissolution of the state-centric society in the moment of its realisation might be considered to be the tragic fate

of modern statehood” (2015: 21). The formation of localised nation-based neocorporatist frameworks occurred in the same period of increased economic, political and cultural expansion, and the hybridisation of CSOs and governments are integral parts of this process. The findings on NPM in this dissertation, seen from this perspective, can be interpreted as a step in the ongoing creeping marketisation (Bode, 2011). We see ongoing negotiation-based collaboration as well as competitively organised public funding and services, leading to a ‘mixed’ landscape. What appears to be network-style governance or some form of localised neocorporatism, could also be understood as the groundwork on which the further expansion of market-logic in civil society and public services is built. There is more to be said here on the role of how *beliefs* and *knowledge* structure these governance arrangements. The shared belief in the role of markets and competition play an important role in this situation. We were not able to examine this in depth in our research, although we touched upon this subject in the chapter on WISEs: these are nonprofit CSOs in which managers see themselves as *entrepreneurs* and where there is widely shared belief in using business-like management practices. The fact that governmental expectations in this sector are centred around *reintegration* and *competition* point to the powerful position of these ideas in the institutional landscape. More insights can be gathered from future research through the framework of governmentality in understanding how beliefs and knowledge function in this context. Following the insights from our research, it is interesting to analyse how these types of knowledge are formed *in the interaction between government and civil society*, thus abandoning the binary perspective of government vs. civil society.

At the same time, we have found how networks do not merely function within an expanding market-logic. Indeed, the governance networks at the local level are in the first place a coping mechanism to expand local services by including more actors. Even though there is a danger of overburdening local CSOs (given the perceived ‘crisis’), there seemed to be a shared belief in the purpose of cooperating and coordinating. At the regional level we have also argued how sector-based networks (in the case of WISEs) adapt to market-based competition as well as governmental expectations. Maybe these networks are localised instances of “invited spaces” (Cornwall, 2004) established by governmental actors? This could in turn reflect the imbalance in power between governments and CSOs. For instance, in the case of the local governance networks, networks are open in terms of cooperation (exchanging information between a wide range of actors) but less so in terms of who is selected to participate in different coordination committees and groups (negotiation on sharing resources and local policy decision making). Furthermore, it can be argued that when local or regional governmental support for these networks inevitably ends (because of their project-based funding), the interactions between local actors is taken up within the existing institutional framework. The openness of the initial

network formation disappears in favour of returning to 'business as usual', although we did see that, on an individual level, some local citizen initiatives succeed in entering the network for institutional exchange.

Also missing from our research is the experience of those who are affected by all these actions and strategies, for instance the employees of WISE and the migrants and refugees arriving in our cities. There is some research that points to the increased management pressures on WISE-employees, and the growing exclusion of migrants from integration services in Flanders. The question here is whether these networks are capable of countering the impact of individualisation and marketization within their respective sectors? Could network-strategies provide an answer to these pressures, or are they merely reinforcing them? There is a danger in seeing networks as always 'a good thing', and dismissing other governance forms as outdated or inefficient. For example, in the case of local networks, strategies focused on the individual (e.g. 'buddy systems' to assist in the search for housing) seem to gather more support than more collective strategies (e.g. expanding the right to housing). While the successes of local networks (and its volunteers) should be recognised, we must not lose sight of their limitations.

Civil society organisations do not only engage in negotiations with public authorities to secure access to public funding, but also to establish the rules by which their actions and services are regulated. This is a core characteristic of neocorporatism. CSOs are important political actors in the neocorporatist framework, and our research does not suggest that this position has been undermined. At least not to such an extent that they are being replaced or pushed out. Government still plays a crucial role in the governance arrangements in modern society. All the institutional processes and structures that we have discussed in our research are affected by various governmental actors, regulations and practices. Each of the networks we saw were embedded in some form of hierarchy, where governmental decisions have a significant impact on large parts of both public services as well as the space for action.

More importantly, the distinction between civil society and government cannot be easily drawn, especially when examining the practices by which the institutional exchange between both spheres are shaped. Boundary spanners cross these lines continuously, actively blurring the distinction ; regulations imposed by government can be the expression of shared beliefs exchanged in negotiations ; local initiatives are sometimes founded on the willingness of administrators, politicians and citizens to take action and deal with important issues. The question becomes, in a Gramscian turn, how both spheres actively shape each other, how

institutions and organisations are established and how they reflect the continuous struggle between social groups in society.

7.3.1 What's next for neocorporatism?

This dissertation has added to the debate on the evolution of governance in relation to the existing institutional exchange between government and civil society. We provided a nuanced answer on the impact of new governance paradigms through a combination of different research cases and methodologies. How do we look at the big question that follows from our research: what's next for neocorporatism?

Answers to this question should not merely end by adding the prefix “post” and calling it a day. One could easily look at the current situation and consider the observed institutional mix a form of ‘postcorporatism’ where competition, market logic and new network-type interactions have become part of the institutional landscape. Neocorporatism should not be confused with the traditional ‘pillarized’ landscape which we discussed in this dissertation, although they have been closely intertwined. The core function of neocorporatism is that it provides a stable institutional exchange between the spheres or systems in society. Part of the ongoing evolution of governance arrangements will be to see what can be considered the equivalents for this integrative function that neocorporatism provided. We have our doubts that the principles of competition and efficiency can provide this function. Indeed, how could the functional differentiation of society be managed by orienting public governance towards only one of its function systems? Equally impossible would be to dream of a normative integration of society, for the same reasons. Indeed, the integration provided by neocorporatism was not a normative one but one built around competing value frameworks. There is a risk that with the rise of ‘new’ political parties the neocorporatist linkages between governments and civil society become strained. For on what grounds could there still be a neocorporatist integration of society? New parties that take control of government might steer it towards more government-led bureaucratic public services or towards governmental steering through market incentives and ‘regulated’ privatisation, thereby avoiding the tenuous negotiations with a civil society in which they do not recognize their own values and experiences.

At the same time, neocorporatism isn't going anywhere soon (although we should not ignore the pressures it experiences): governments, both local and central, are in many ways dependent on the information and services provided to them by CSOs as well as CSOs' capacity to inform public debate. CSOs, as we have seen, still depend on the government for access to the policy process as well as financial and professional support. In this fundamental

exchange, governments have outsourced many public services to civil society which are not easily turned over to the market or governmental agencies and departments. Any systemic change will have to take into consideration this limited governmental capacity to provide public services, while acknowledging its still powerful control of rules and regulations.

The future of governance is not a question of whether one system ('neocorporatism') is replaced by another ('post-X'), but which collective decisions will inform the incremental institutional changes? Will we witness an ongoing neoliberal hegemonic belief in the values of competition and individual choice, or will we continue to valiantly muddle our way forward by attempting to provide inclusionary spaces for collective decision-making? While we may hope for the latter, the future of public governance cannot be designed through blueprints and abstract schematics, only through the continuous efforts of actors seeking to establish inclusionary linkages between government and civil society.

7.3.2 Networks and metagovernance

Governance literature has spent a lot of attention on the notion that networks have become the leading *institution* in modern society. Networks are supposed to be flexible and open forms of governance which are particularly adapted to the demands and circumstances of the reflexive modern society and therefore well suited to help deal with wicked issues. The problem with many of these network-type analyses is that they contain flawed analytical and normative arguments. Analytically, networks are considered to be trust-based institutions and are often contrasted with *hierarchies* (coercion based) and *markets* (exchange based). Yet, as we have argued in chapter 2, it is naive to consider networks to be free of coercion or immune to monetary exchanges (and vice versa: to consider trust as less important in hierarchies and markets). Normatively, networks are ideally considered to be institutions through which actors can collectively work towards shared goals, based on the pooling of resources and information. The principle sounds nice, but in practice things can go very differently. Firstly, cooperation in networks can lead to difficult questions being avoided. It is precisely in order to achieve good cooperation that consensus is sought and conflicts avoided. This could lead to civil society organisations becoming depoliticised: they adopt a less critical stance in order to keep 'the good peace'. The difficult political issues are then no longer tackled, but the network focuses on what can be achieved without too much friction. Second, networks can be a disguised form of privatisation or marketing. This criticism is mainly voiced in the context of research on urban development, where networks lead to forms of soft regulation that mainly give economic actors more influence. Networks, so the criticism goes,

are particularly suitable for so-called *entrepreneurial* actors who feel comfortable in an environment where constantly changing relationships are important.

There is thus a wide gap between networks as ideal typical governance institutions and the reality in which networks take place. Networks can indeed offer flexibility, and bring together a wider range of actors, but they should not be misunderstood. We agree with Davies and Spicer that governance analysis should be done through "(...) a cautious, circumspect, and agnostic approach" (2015: 235). This approach has informed us from the start, focussing on the *institutional mix* through which governance arrangements are constructed. Here, we would like to consider some final thoughts on the analysis of governance.

Let's start with an interesting character from the literature on network studies and which we have encountered in chapter six: *the boundary spanner*. What makes this character interesting is that it is often presented as a typical *network role*. However, more broadly it can be argued that boundary spanners thrive in the context of *mixed governance arrangements*, regardless whether these can be categorised as networks. In chapter six we have discussed boundary spanning in the context of local governance networks, but we also concluded that these networks were embedded on top of the existing institutional arrangement. Looking back, we argue here that what is at stake is not so much the need for linking organisations in the context of expanding *networks*. What is more fundamentally at stake is the function of linking organisations and actors from within the complexity of policy making in a functionally differentiated society with specialised organisations and administrations, and growing *interdependency* between organisations and policy domains. In this institutional mix, boundary spanners can play a vital role for organisations to adapt to this complex environment by proactively transcending the boundaries between organisations.

A particular concern is to safeguard the difference between the role of boundary spanning and the role of *gatekeeping*. Where boundary spanning is concerned with bridging the gap between organisations in both directions, gatekeepers are more unidirectional: they use information to close off access to their organisation, and manage the flow of information accordingly. This difference is a crucial point to keep in mind if organisations want to encourage boundary spanning among their workers. Boundary spanners will be, by definition, placed in a position where they can turn into gatekeepers. This could result in, for instance, restricted access for new actors and self-serving selection of information.

A second concern with the concept of boundary spanners, is that it is closely related to the 'connectionist' ideology of neoliberalism in which the establishing partnerships, consensus

and trust are encouraged while ignoring the power asymmetries between the actors and organisations. For example, the boundary spanning which we identified in chapter six occurs in a specific context which fundamentally deals with the lives and rights of refugees and migrants. The act of boundary spanning should not be uncritically regarded as a 'celebration of the network'. As someone said in one of our CSI Flanders discussion groups: in the end, local and central governments refused to take their responsibility and passed the work on to local CSOs. However, at the same time the work done by the boundary spanners in these networks have brought together new actors and established new relations through shared experiences. They have enabled other actors to 're-politicise' the plight of refugees and migrants and advocate for more fundamental changes, both from within local civil society and local government.

Finally, let's talk about *metagovernance*. There are three moments in our research where the issue of metagovernance comes to mind. The first moment comes when examining our empirical chapters together. When considering this complexity of actors, practices and institutions, how can one imagine metagovernance from which the whole can be observed — or even more: *steered*. Here, metagovernance provides what we earlier called the *integration* of different function systems. While we cannot provide full answers here, we do have questions that guide us. Should we think of this as one 'metagovernor' or of multiple 'metagovernors'? Who would this metagovernor be? Can this complexity be overseen from a single point of view? If one follows the perspective of functional differentiation in systems theory, it is difficult to see how such a position could even exist. For most authors on metagovernance, the state here remains the most logical place. If one were to accept the possibility of metagovernance, different issues come to mind. Firstly, metagovernance would require an overarching *narrative* or *imaginary* according to which the roles of social actors would be understood. For this first step, some would argue that the leading imaginary in contemporary society is that of competition and entrepreneurship, the ideology of neoliberalism (Dardot & Laval, 2013). What imaginary could come in its place, with the same strength and vigour? And would indeed the state be the best place for this new imaginary to take form? Second, metagovernance would require the building of institutions based on the leading principles that are (re)produced from these overarching narratives. Third, this would have to be achieved without setting in motion a process of *functional de-differentiation*, or eliminating the autonomous initiative of other social actors. The differentiation between state and civil society in Flanders was for instance historically built on the principle of *active subsidiarity*. This refers to a system in which civil society organised a wide range of social functions (education, culture, health care, ...) and the government provided legal frameworks, financial support and administrative support. This

principle can be informative of the role metagovernance can play in seeking a new balance between government and civil society.

The second moment occurs at the end of our chapter on local CSOs, where we concluded that many municipalities are missing an active exchange between local CSOs and local policymakers. Of course, local civil society differs from place to place and certainly between larger cities and smaller municipalities; and our empirical scope was limited. Within these limitations, we argue that in smaller or mid-sized municipalities local civil society is rapidly ageing and CSOs are often unsure about their future. If one were to invest in (re)activating the relationship between these local CSOs and their local governments, a good start would be to establish a higher-order view on what local CSOs need, what organisations are new and which have disappeared (and why), what their concerns are, and in what domains or neighbourhoods there are fewer CSOs than perhaps expected or needed. A local government that would take up this task, would of course also have to re-invent itself as a small-scale metagovernor in its own city, and grow away from the more traditional model of providing funding and support for small-scale. In our conversations with local officials we found that most of these local governments have a good view on the CSOs that are active in their community, but that their capacity to meaningfully engage with them might be very limited. Here, the task would be to invest in these specific capacities for local government.

A last moment where we encounter metagovernance is by taking up a *normative point of view*. Here, of course, we refer to Kooiman's view on metagovernance as a third-order observation from which one can reflect upon the "whole governance experience". For instance, in chapter four one can normatively ask to what extent this governance arrangement imposes a restrictive view on labour relations and the position of workers with disabilities within these relations? Should 'work integration social enterprises' indeed be focused on reintegration into a labour market in which those with low education are often thrown into precarious working conditions? To what extent does the governance arrangement contribute to *the reproduction of this norm*, and what does this mean for the workers involved? Such normative questions are a crucial part of evaluating governance arrangements and the policies which they produce.

From all of the above this much is clear: *the death of government is greatly exaggerated*. Throughout our dissertation we have encountered many instances where government is actively shaping its environment in many ways and on different levels: governmental laws and regulations, administrative procedures, governmental actors making day-to-day decisions, and even governmental values and discourse. Our research is a witness to the continuing importance of government as well as the reality that it would be impossible to speak about

government without also taking into account the contribution of civil society. On the level of public discourse and hegemonic ideologies, on the institutional level as well as in the day-to-day practices: the interplay between government and civil society is crucial in understanding how governance functions.

8 References

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