Development Network Organizations – Platforms for Reinforcing Local Sovereignty or Instruments for Top-Down Governance?

A Case-Study of the Child Protection Community in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

Formulations in international policies often give expression to assumptions that network organizations have positive effects on development work by increasing coordination and collaboration between actors that are trying to obtain similar goals. However, few case studies have investigated the interactor dynamics of network organizations operating in development contexts, especially within the social sector. This master thesis in political science builds on a mainly interview-based field study of development network organizations within the child protection community in Burkina Faso. Its analytical framework combines scholarly contributions from the field of network theory and from critical development theory, which leads to a discussion about how network engagement influences interactor dynamics between aid-donors and aid-recipient child protection organizations in Burkina Faso. The fieldwork findings indicate that although policy-makers often claim that the institutionalization of development network organizations may increase the influence of local organizations over decision-making, socioeconomic hierarchies tend to hinder local NGOs from articulating and pushing through their own agendas within the frameworks of established networks, in favor for international NGOs.

Keywords: development network organizations; network theory; critical development theory; partnership theory; child protection; Burkina Faso

List of abbreviations

CPN-A – Child protection network A (pseudonym)
CPN-B – Child protection network B (pseudonym)
INGO – International non-governmental organization
MSP – Ministry for Social Protection (pseudonym)
ODA – Official development assistance
NAO – Network administration organization
NGO – Non-governmental organization
UN – United Nations
UNICEF – United Nations’ Children’s Fund
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Preface

In 2018, I had a five-months internship in a local organization working with street children and children in conflict with the law in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. This permitted me to observe both the work practices of the organization’s staff and their relationships with external stakeholders, such as their European donor organization, the Burkinabe public social service agency, and other NGOs. For my host organization, network engagement was something new – a recently undertaken activity resulting from encouragement by their donor partner. This made me interested in the interplay between the organizations that the networks included. Especially, I was curious to know whether my host organization’s new network engagement would render it more receptive for influences from the international donor society and from public authorities, or rather reinforce its capacity to articulate and push for its own agenda in front of various decision-makers. Therefore, I was very happy to receive the Minor Field Studies grant (MFS), distributed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), for travelling back to Burkina Faso in order to investigate the phenomenon of child protection networks within the framework of writing my master thesis in political science during the fall 2019.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the people working within the child protection community in Burkina Faso who have contributed to this research project, despite being occupied with their important work. Especially, I would like to thank the employees at the NGO where I was previously hosted as a trainee, who inspired me to look deeper into the phenomenon of child protection networks. You know who you are. I would also like to thank Professor Maria Eriksson Baaz for having given me constructive feedback during my fieldwork, in the role as my academic supervisor. Last, thanks to my family and friends who let me know that they are always with me, even when we are far from each other.
1. Introduction

*Development network organizations* are coalitions of multiple organizations that share common interests within specific subject spheres of the wider development sector. Scholars usually ascribe these network organizations characteristics of having high interconnectivity and interdependency among their members, which is assumed to facilitate coordination and collaboration between actors that are trying to obtain similar goals (Petersen, 2016). Even though the concept ‘development network organization’ may appear as a dry theoretic term, it has direct connections to working policies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development literally states that fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals requires revitalization of existing global multi-actor partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society (UN, 2019a). According to the UN, “these inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level” (UN, 2019a).

Development network organizations may be studied as excellent examples of social platforms where various kinds of organizational partnerships may come about and connect actors working at closer or at larger distance from end beneficiaries of development aid. In this thesis, networks within the sphere of child protection are focused upon. However, network organizations are in practice organized by different structures, driven by different working goals, and influenced by unique power dynamics that arise following the interactions between their members (Provan et al, 2007; Baker et al, 2011). Therefore, the overall success of development network organizations cannot be taken for granted. What is usually not clarified in policy works and in network theories is that development network organizations may be starkly characterized by their varying member compositions. In this thesis, a comparison is made between the interactor dynamics in homogenous child protection networks, mainly including national aid-recipient non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and heterogenous child protection networks, including both national and international NGOs, multilateral organizations and government institutions.

During the last decades, much of the literature within the field of development studies has concerned problematics related to 1) the competition between foreign aid recipient organizations in diverse national contexts (e.g. Thörn, 2016); 2) to donor-recipient
“partnerships” characterized by unequal conditions (Abrahamsen, 2004; Eriksson Baaz, 2005); and 3) to the incapacity or reluctance of public institutions in some countries to change their functioning in order to better respond to the needs of the beneficiary populations that they are responsible for (Gupta, 2012). This thesis aims to relate existing management-related theories about network organizations with the more critical development studies literature. More specifically, development network organizations characterized by different member compositions will be investigated in order to explore whether conclusions that have been made by critical development scholars are equally applicable on homogenous and heterogenous development network organizations, and if the interactor dynamics within homogenous or heterogenous network organizations provide better ground for local aid-recipient organizations to become empowered and articulate and push for their own agendas versus the donor society and political decision-makers.

Although the theme of this thesis is rooted in existing theory accounts, it must be noted that the literature on development network organizations is narrow. Hence, this case-study partially aims to increase our knowledge about these phenomena by applying a qualitative, inductive research approach. In order to do so, the ways of interaction between organizations found within the child protection community in Burkina Faso are used as an example. Burkina Faso is a largely aid-dependent country, where the international donor community for long has had a large influence on the national politics within the sphere of child protection, wherefore it may be selected as an interesting location for studying the interactor dynamics within development network organizations. The study material consists of original empirical data, mainly collected from interviews with small and medium-sized NGOs, with international donor organizations, with UNICEF and with public institutions working with child protection in Burkina Faso.

1.1 Research Questions

This master thesis serves to answer the following research question:

- What are the internal dynamics (i.e. the coordination mechanisms, the coherence and the possibilities for various members to articulate and push for
their own agendas) in organization networks within the child protection sector in Burkina Faso, and what factors might influence these dynamics?

Accounting for the fact that network organizations may incorporate different actors, which likely influences their dynamics, the sub-questions below will be used to break down the main research question:

A) What are the dynamics of homogenous networks, mainly including national NGOs?
B) What are the dynamics of heterogenous networks, including both national and international NGOs as well as representatives from governmental and multilateral institutions?
C) How can we understand the differences between these types of networks?

1.2 Limitations

The empirical material used for the analysis was conducted during nine weeks of fieldwork in Ouagadougou. This material only covers two of the most well-recognized child protection networks in Burkina Faso, although a few other networks exist. If time and opportunities to mobility would have allowed, the incorporation of a larger number of network organizations, characterized by different structures, functions and member compositions, could have generated even richer study results. Furthermore, the conclusions made about the child protection networks studied for this thesis may not be valid for network organizations found within other development sectors. However, since international non-governmental organizations and multilateral organizations such as the UN often make attempts to implement similar systems and tools for social protection in different countries, the results and discussion may be relevant to compare with potential future analyses of child protection networks established in other geographic contexts.

However, regarding the lack of previous literature on development organization networks, it can in spite the indisputably limited generalizability of the findings be argued that this thesis makes up a relevant research contribution by giving attention to the existence of these phenomena. Hopefully, future scholars will acknowledge the use of making more extensive research on development network organizations within various fields.
1.3 Outline

The second chapter gives a brief overview of Burkinabe and international political strategies encouraging development network collaboration, with focus on those addressing stakeholders within the child protection sector. Chapter 3 presents the theory framework used for the analysis of the empirical case, starting with a discussion of central concepts. The components of the theory framework are divided in two categories: theories about development network organizations respectively critical development theory, with emphasis on theories related to global development partnerships. After the presentation of these theoretical viewpoints, the contribution of this thesis to existing knowledge accounts is further explained. Subsequently follows Chapter 4, which accounts for the research design and methodology used, i.e. for the case selection, methods used for data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and potential personal biases. In Chapter 5, the analysis of the empirical material is presented. Chapter 6 compares the findings concerning the dynamics of heterogenous and homogenous child protection networks. Last, Chapter 7 comments the general findings of the thesis and relates them to a wider research context.

2 Child Protection in the Context of Burkina Faso

The case used for analysis in this study is found within the child protection community in Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso is one of the weakest economies in the world and usually ranks among the bottom five countries in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019). Since formally becoming independent from the French colonial power in 1960, it has been reliant on support from the international donor community for providing welfare and protection to its roughly 20 million citizens. In total, approximately 1 600 national and international NGOs of different size are operating in Burkina Faso. 75 % of these are occupied with activities serving to protect and to promote the interests of children and youths (MASSN, 2015). This is not surprising, considering the country’s high population growth rate (3 %) and that close to half of the population is aged below fifteen (World Population Review, 2019).

Child protection may in a development context be seen as a niche of the sector promoting children’s rights in more general terms. While the latter includes all operations related to fulfilling the objectives of the UN’s Convention on the Rights of
the Child (of which promoting qualitative education available for all is a goal devouring much resources), child protection refers to providing preventive measures and response to violence, exploitation and abuse against children (UNICEF, 2006).

In Burkina Faso, the national laws on child protection distinguish two categories of vulnerable children: children in conflict with the law and children in danger (Protection of Children in Conflict with the Law or in Danger Act, 2014). The first category refers to children who have committed or are accused for crimes. The second category includes subgroups of children who are, have been or risk experiencing violence, street life, child labor, trafficking and sexual abuse, and consumption of toxic and/or illegal substances. Other vulnerable groups of children that are not recognized in the law text are disabled children, orphans, children exploited to harmful traditional practices (notably female genital mutilation and child marriage), refugees and children missing personal identification documents (IBCR, 2017).

In Burkina Faso, the Ministry for Social Protection (pseudonym) is responsible for implementing the government’s policies on child protection. However, child protection activities in Burkina Faso are to high extent financed by foreign donors, such as UNICEF, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), bilateral development funds and private actors. While multilateral and bilateral institutions tend to prefer subsidizing the activities of the Burkinabe government, INGOs and corporations often distribute funds to smaller national and international NGOs addressing specific groups of beneficiaries.

Following a global trend related to the Paris Declaration of 2005 and the Accra Agenda of Action of 2008 (OECD, 2019), actors of the Burkinabe child protection community – in particular UNICEF and a couple of international NGOs – did in the beginning of the millennium identify a need for establishing a more coherent national child protection system, that could improve coordination among the myriad of organizations that are active within the field. Examples of how different organizations define this system approach are:

“the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection related risks. These systems are part of social protection, and extend beyond it. At the level of
prevention, their aim includes supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation” - UNICEF (2008:4f)

“a set of coherent actions and actors for which the child is the initial point, and which serve to guarantee the rights and the well-being of the child through constructing synergies within and between the environments of protecting agents” - Terre des Hommes (2011:6, author’s translation)

“child protection laws and policies; meaningful coordination across government department and between sectors at different levels; knowledge and data on child protection issues and good practices; regulations, minimum standards and oversight; preventive and responsive services; a skilled child protection workforce; adequate funding; children’s voices and participation; and an aware and supportive public” - Save the Children (2010:1)

For many organizations in Burkina Faso, the notion of a child protection system is closely connected to that of ‘case management’, which here refers to organizations’ processes of identifying children in vulnerable position, for subsequently either providing direct support to them or creating connections between the identified children and other agencies that have the right competences and resources for satisfying their individual needs.

Now being inscribed in the Burkinabe political framework for promotion of the rights of the child – COSPE (2009) - the child protection system approach has induced the creation of various interorganizational networks. Not least, both the heterogenous and the homogenous network in focus for this study were formed during the period when COSPE gained ground. As mentioned in the introduction, the approach framing interorganizational collaboration is also well coherent with formulations in various global development policies, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which stretches over a wide range of development sectors other than that of child protection. Altogether, these facts give incitements to increase the general knowledge accounts about the factors determining the outcomes of organizations’ interactions in the contexts of development network organizations.
3 Theory Framework

This chapter serves to connect relevant theory accounts from management and governance research with the problematics of power distribution between development aid donors and aid-recipient organizations, that is often highlighted by development scholars. This theory intersection has rarely been given attention within previous research but is nevertheless crucial in order to understand the features and dynamics of Burkinabé child protection networks. However, before the respective theoretical perspectives are presented more in detail, some central concepts used in the analysis of the selected case should be discussed.

3.1 Central Concepts and Themes

This chapter deals with conceptualizations of development network organizations and also of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are central players in the networks in focus for this study.

3.1.1 Development Network Organizations

‘Development network organizations’ is a theoretical construct composed of three analytical entities: ‘development’, ‘organization’ and ‘network’. The interpretative nature of this paper entails an exploration of how these entities can be understood when put together. However, it must initially be underlined that the development concept itself is problematic and widely contested. Namely, although it in everyday political lingo normally is used with a positive connotative meaning, many critical scholars contend that the praising and idealization of development in reality contribute to reinforcing an imperial or neo-colonial world order (Escobar, 2004; Thörn, 2016). From having been used as a countersign for activities leading to economic growth, democratization and poverty reduction, it has later become questioned by scholars who are critical towards the fact that in spite all the money and efforts that have been spent on development activities over the decades, extreme poverty and global inequalities persist (Gupta, 2012). There are of course many academic definitions of the development concept, although it is not relevant for this study to go over them all. What matters more is how the network member organizations under study define societal development themselves, and in what ways they potentially experience that they contribute to such. This thesis examines governance mechanisms in the context of a vulnerable economy which is dependent on foreign financial support to function as for
now. Followingly, the development concept is operationalized to distinguish public, private and civil society actors that are somehow engaged with the activity of converting foreign financial aid donations into societal action (or non-action).

Network organizations are organizations that inhibit both formal and informal structures and practices, such as member selection criteria and meeting structures, and that function through mechanisms of networking (Petersen, 2016). These network mechanisms refer to goal-directed behavior focused on creating, cultivating and utilizing interpersonal relationships (Gibson et al, 2014). In contrast to mechanistic or bureaucratic structures, networks are organic. They are also more flexible than hierarchies, but have more control than markets (Petersen, 2016). Network organizations composed by whole organizations rather than individuals are sometimes referred to as interorganizational networks or umbrella organizations. Usage of the concept of ‘umbrella organizations’ is henceforth avoided, as some readers may associate them with collaborations formed to protect particular business interests. The notion may as well contribute to creating an understanding of development network organizations as constituent of members largely sharing common ideals, aspirations and identities, which might sometimes but definitely not always be the case. Hence, as this study attempts to capture expressions for different understandings of prevalent network dynamics from below, ‘development network organizations’ and ‘interorganizational networks’ are applied as the more neutral notions of preference.

The section for empirical analysis below treats child protection network organizations that are classified as either homogenic or heterogenous. Homogenous child protection networks refer to network organizations whose members, or at least the majority of them, are national NGOs (see definition below). Heterogenous networks refer to network organizations that may include both national NGOs, INGOs, representatives for public institutions and other actors.

Conclusively, development network organizations may be understood as organizations that are functioning through mechanisms of networking. They are also composed of multiple member organizations, sharing the trait that they all have a role in the global value chain of managing foreign aid transactions. The terms ‘interorganizational

\[\text{1 This classification has because of lack of previous research on the topic been constructed by the author.}\]
networks’, ‘organization networks’ and simply ‘networks’ are in the following used interchangeably with ‘development network organizations’.

3.1.2 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In this thesis, network organizations in which most of the members are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are investigated. NGOs are difficult to categorize because of the large differentiation in their characteristics, in their attitudes towards financial management (or towards ‘making profit’) and in their willingness to communicate or collaborate with governments (Fisher, 1997). Here, there concept of NGOs is applied in broad terms to neither exclude civil society or member-based/grassroot organizations nor organizations whose behavior is remarkably influenced by their contacts with governments and donors. What brings them together may only be their outspoken mission to contribute to an immediate or future positive change in life conditions for the population segments that are defined as their beneficiaries. This stance is much in line with Vakil’s (1997:2060) definition of NGOs as “self-governing, private, not-for-profit organizations that are geared to improving the quality of life for disadvantaged people”. Moreover, this definition allows for contrasting NGOs with other types of organizations, such as trade unions, professional associations and organizations concerned with e.g. sports or arts (Lewis, 2010).

However, NGOs can also be distinguished by the contexts that they were created in and by the sources of their funding. In this thesis, NGOs who were funded in Burkina Faso and who are either net recipients of foreign financial donations or/and who allocate their funds on national basis for later spending them on home grounds are hereby called ‘national NGOs’. These can be compared with international NGOs (INGOs), that have been founded abroad and spread their mission to other countries, among them Burkina Faso. INGOs may have regional or national offices and conduct activities over which they have full or partial ownership. However, many of them uses the approach of establishing partnerships with national NGOs, that receive funding by implementing projects initiated or by competitive measures selected by the INGOs.

Noteworthy, nongovernmental organizations with a certain turnover and documentation of their activities may in Burkina Faso receive an official NGO status, which is supposed to indicate their reliability. The official NGO status brings certain benefits to the organizations, not least entitlement to tax-free purchases of expensive
goods, e.g. vehicles.\textsuperscript{2} However, the use of the NGO concept in this text does not discriminate between the child protection organizations in Burkina Faso that have obtained the official NGO status and those who have not.

3.1.3 The Third Sector – A Social Sector ‘Doing Good’?

Before finishing the discussion about categorizing agents occupied with development activities, a note will be made on differentiating understandings of the whole development sector, sometimes referred to as the ‘third’ sector. There is a big ongoing debate, which can unfortunately not be fully covered but only introduced within the scope of this thesis, about what distinguishes this third sector from the public and the private social spheres. Some would say that while the public sector serves to circulate tax money along with ideologically motivated political programs, and while the private sector operates to make financial profit, the third part of the trichotomy serves to ‘do good’ (Fisher 1997). For example, Mathews (1997) claims that NGOs are quicker to respond to new needs and opportunities than what governments are and that they often do so with greater quality. Mathews also suggests that the global spread of NGOs contributes to disrupting traditional hierarchies and to distributing power among more diverse peoples and groups, which leads to a global ‘power shift’. Unfortunately, though, the division of society into a public, a private, and a ‘do-good-sphere’ ignores divergent perspectives on what good development really is, and on what measures should be applied for accomplishing such. It also fails to recognize that NGOs, that may be attributed the role as the main players of the third sector, often are dependent on political programs for determining what is good and to whom more support and benefits should be distributed to - at least if they turn over donations from public and corporate funds. Furthermore, with the big amounts of aid money that is transferred between different parties in order to achieve vaguely defined global development, many people and enterprises have realized that it is possible to earn profits from making career or running businesses (i.e. NGOs) within the third sector (Considine, 2003; Richey and Ponte, 2014). NGOs functioning on these grounds may be perceived as marketized, competitive service providers, likely to direct their activities in accordance with what the Western donor community identifies as key solutions to

\textsuperscript{2} This particular benefit can alternatively be achieved by membership in the organization NGO-Union (pseudonym), which functions as a labor union for both national and international NGOs in Burkina Faso.
development, rather than with the solutions elaborated and advocated by aid beneficiary populations (Thörn, 2016).

In summary, reified reductionist conceptions of what NGOs and the third sector are and what purposes they serve have contributed to de-politicizing the global development community in ways comparative to how ‘local conditions’ have been blamed for being the roots of poverty, requiring technical rather than political solutions (Thörn, 2016; Fisher 1997; Banks et al, 2015; Wilson, 2017). This means that empowering NGOs may appear to be the magic solution to all injustices and complex problems that because of power struggles or competition are hard for public and private parties to solve. In practice, though, the third sector inhibits many elements of hardship, such as competition between third sector actors to receive donor funding; struggles between advocators of different solutions to common problems; and exaggerated influence by strong, individual organization leaders on development programs. Altogether, recognition of these dimensions undermines what has justified the latest decades’ glorification of the third sector (Banks et al, 2015; Lewis 2010), which may well partially but perhaps not fully be justified.

3.2 Development Network Theory

Despite the increased support for inter-actor communication and policy-implementation within the development community, the academic literature on development network organizations is very limited. That is, while many scholars have provided accounts on management styles of networks found within the business sector, little has been written about the interactions between NGOs and public institutions turning over aid money. When it comes to the existing business management literature concerning networks, quite rich knowledge accounts have been produced about the internal leadership styles of networks, but few texts concern how networks interact with and are affected by externalities, such as policy change, economic fluctuations, etc. (Provan et al, 2007). In a development context, these externalities are very important, since they determine the access to capital and hence the opportunity to function for many organizations that are undertaking development activities of different character. Also, scholars have expressed demand for studies of why and how individual organizations become engaged within networks and what consequences this
engagement brings about (ibid). A review of empirical studies of interorganizational networks concludes the following:

“it is clear that at a more micro level, organizations should be brought back into network-level research to investigate, for example, how, on one hand, organizations are affected by their engagement in different types of networks and how, on the other hand, organizations get ready for networking. On a more macro level, the more or less recursive interplay between whole networks and regional clusters, organizational fields, or complete societies should also be put on the agenda of network researchers.” (Provan et al, 2007:511f)

Conclusively, when analyzing interorganizational networks, it is particularly important to notice two major analytical dimensions. The first one concerns micro-level observations of the inner workings, dynamics and between-member-organization relationships that are produced within networks. The second dimension treats the formal and informal processes, functions and interactions with externalities of whole network entities (Provan et al, 2007). These analytical dimensions are of course interconnected, as individual member organizations are both influencing and influenced by ‘whole network’ functions and dynamics. Subsequently, scholarly contributions related to each one of them are presented.

3.2.1 Internal Dynamics within Organization Networks

The micro-level analysis of interorganizational networks may be useful to reveal 1) what impact network ties has on the performance of individual organizations; 2) which are the most and the least beneficial types of network connections, seen from the perspectives of individual member organizations; 3) which network positions are the most or the least influential; and 4) how changes within and outside the network may cause that the positions of member organizations shift over time (Provan et al, 2007). While undertaking a microlevel analysis of an interorganizational network, it is of interest to regard how the member organizations are positioned in relation to one another. For doing so, one may for example observe how many network ties to other network members that specific organizations have, and how easily organizations can share and take part of assets such as information from the organizations that they are connected with (ibid). One may also investigate whether the organization has the role
of being or is using a gatekeeper or a broker, that is, a mediator between organizations holding exceptional positions inside or outside the network and the core members or the lead organization of the network. Another aspect of interest is whether the organization is part of any ‘clique’, i.e. group made up by two or more other member organizations defending certain interests within the network community (ibid). For example, it will in this thesis be considered whether (and if so why or why not) national and international NGOs form separate cliques within the Burkinabe child protection networks observed.

When the micro-level phenomena of several member organizations have been explored, a researcher may estimate the overall centralization or density of a network as a whole, that is, how close and how widespread the connections between various members are. High density might at one hand be positive for creating a sense of group connectedness and facilitating communication infrastructure between members, but on the other hand, too high density may increase the burden of coordination in undesired ways and make administration more costly. Repeated examinations of networks at organization-level allows for getting an overview of cliques and potentially of fragmentation and gaps between the inner groupings of whole networks (ibid).

The coordination mechanisms of development network organizations vary to quite large extent. According to a useful typology describing different modes of network governance developed by Provan and Kenis (2008), networks may either be participant-governed, guided by one lead-organization or directed by a network administration organization (NAO). If a network is participant-governed, there is no formal governance-structure other than that of interactions between network members themselves, who may control network activities though regular or irregular meetings and through informal but ongoing interorganizational communication and collaboration. Lead-organization governance implies that one organization with more resources or higher legitimacy is given or is taking the major responsibility for the maintenance of the internal functions and dynamics of the network organization, and also for developing external relationships. Last, NAOs function similarly to lead-organization governance, but with the difference that the coordinating entity (which may even be one individual) is formed only to oversee the network (ibid). However, these forms of governance should not be seen as absolute, especially as they can coexist.
Political theories about interorganizational network collaboration suggest that depending on the circumstances, either top-down or bottom-up governance is likely to arise within the networks (Aronoff and Kubik, 2015). This is a consequence of the unequal power distribution between individual member organizations, who possess more respectively less social and financial capital in relation to one another. Anyhow, whether traditionally strong institutions, such as international donor organizations and representatives for government agencies, are influential over or are influenced by NGOs seems to vary (Fisher, 1997). Notably, actors that on the surface appear to be less powerful may not necessarily be so when forming coalitions (or intra-network ‘cliques’) with other organizations.

3.2.2 Interorganizational Networks – Platforms for Collaboration and Inclusive Decision-Making or Instruments for Top-Down Governance?

As stated, there are several reasons why development network organizations are popular among many public representatives, scholars and (I)NGOs. Shortly, they may constitute ground for negotiation and redistribution of various resources that can make new projects come about. Organizations that agree to the terms and conditions for becoming included in the networks do partly lose some autonomy, but they are also supposed to gain the benefits of taking part of shared resources, information exchange and the possibility to share risks with other organizations (Brown – Keast, 2003). These features are noted by both larger and smaller institutions, despite that the provision of social services over the last decades has been characterized by increased fragmentation, caused by marketization and decentralization, in many national contexts. It now appears as the increased fragmentation has not resulted in less but more connections between the public, the private, and the third sector, as actors within these social spheres have realized the benefits of communicating with each other in order to avoid tensions and barriers (ibid). When it comes to the relationships between states and NGOs, states have in some contexts also started to make more use of (or as some authors express it: ‘capitalize on’) the competence and the services offered by non-governmental actors within the field (ibid). However, this is not always unproblematic, especially as some historic examples (e.g. from the Soviet Union) illustrate scenarios of authorities utilizing interorganizational networks in order to implement priorities of their own isolated agendas, benefiting from the resources and
closeness-to-people positions held by NGOs without looking much to the interests articulated by the civil society (Aronoff and Kubik, 2015).

There are wider accounts telling that the goods of network organizations are contentious. For example, scholars who have analyzed governmental institutionalization of network organizations have criticized such missions for far too confidently claiming to have made success in shifting away hierarchical elements from governance (Hudson, 2009, in Baker et al, 2011). ‘Superficial’ network organizations constructed by powerful institutions, whose leaders like to claim that they are part of bottom-up decision-making processes, might not always succeed to substitute top-down policy work in the ways sometimes claimed (Fisher, 1997; Hudson, 2004). This might be especially relevant to consider in a development context, where foreign donors often have large influence over both government institutions and civil society.

A major question for this thesis is whether development network organizations in their exchange with external institutions contribute to making any policy or juridical change come about, or if they contribute to any change in action programs owned by governments, private corporations or powerful donor organizations. Looking at NGOs, they have in some environments taken on the role as brokers, or mediators, between civil society groupings, states and businesses (Banks et al, 2015). According to the social structural theory of competition, this happens when there is a structural gap between two or more actors who have complementary access to different information accounts or resources (Burt and Burt, 1995). Following, if a third part – in this case a whole network organization, an individual member organization or a clique within a network - manages to fill the gap, this might create an important competitive advantage and strengthen the third part, who would become more potent to influence policy or deals between diverse development agents.

The above reasoning could beneficially be complemented with a discussion about the discursive construction of the ‘local’ (Mohan and Stokke, 2008) and about the depolitization of the third sector (Fisher 1997; Banks et al, 2015). Unfortunately, there is only limited space available for this discussion within the framework of this thesis. However, it can certainly not be assumed that national NGOs are particularly interested in influencing the political agenda or the strategies of donor INGOs. In case development network organizations primarily function on the grounds of distributing
budget funds to appropriate service suppliers or contract NGOs, work for forming public opinion or political lobbying might not be prioritized by the member organizations. Moreover, there is a risk that tensions and competitive elements between national NGOs and agencies are disregarded if institutionalization of development network organizations is starkly promoted by foreign donor organizations. Hence, the development network organizations receiving so much praise, not least by international donor agencies, might in practice not always generate the grassroot empowerment and the comprehensiveness among diverse sector agents projected by their advocates. As formulated by Mohan and Stokke (2008, p.3):

“hegemonic development discourses, generally emanating from the Bretton Woods institutions and Western development aid agencies, construct ‘the local’ in ways that create certain opportunities for local participation but also renders development as a technocratic and depoliticized process.”

Applied in this particular study, the statement might provoke the thought construction of development network organizations as top-down institutionalized clubs for exclusively selected members, of which the benefits are only shared with agents who are already part of the social establishment. However, further empirical studies are needed to estimate whether this reasoning is appropriate.

### 3.3 Development Partnership Theory

There is good reason to look into the potential of development network organizations to frame understanding between funding partners and implementers of development projects. Since the 1980s, partnerships between foreign aid donors and recipient organizations, with the latter being responsible for the delicate task of converting aid money into action and outputs, have largely ruled as a model for global development transactions (Abrahamsen, 2004; Thörn, 2016; Gupta, 2012; Eriksson Baaz, 2005). However, these bilateral partnerships have been criticized for not always being as efficient and productive as desired. Although the partnerships have been institutionalized in the name of empowering aid beneficiary populations, the tough and specific deliverables demanded by donor organizations, as well as requirements of voluminous monitoring, have forced national NGOs to adjust their activity programs
to fit the ideals of their foreign maecenas. In other words, the institutionalization of these kinds of partnerships between powerful donors and often smaller, local recipient organizations might have contributed to reinvigorate practices of conditionality preventing national NGOs in net recipient countries from being part of controlling the agenda for development projects happening in their own societies (Abrahamsen, 2004). Hence, the potential of development network organizations to frame discussions between foreign aid donor and recipient organizations about development needs and methods in local contexts should be further investigated. In the best case, institutionalization of similar networks could imply an opportunity to substitute hierarchic commanding of development activities with collective, multi-actor elaboration of activity programs aspiring to improve the life conditions for people living in vulnerable economies.

Anyway, the development partnership era has also brought with it an increased competition for funds between national NGOs (Thörn, 2016). Many organizations are even created (or reformed) directly to respond to the requests spelled out in international donors’ calls for proposals. Following, it is not unusual that these ‘inorganic’ organizations, based on donors’ ideals rather than on local communities’ willingness to self-organize for accomplishing societal change, disperse when donors’ project funding reach their end (ibid). It would of course be possible to use canonical liberal market theory to argue that competition among national NGOs results in more qualitative service offers to end aid beneficiaries, as organizations providing (according to the ruling agenda) less well-elaborated services are denied financial support from international donors. However, a first argument speaking against this claim is that more competition requires more expenditures on promotion, which implies that less funds reach end beneficiaries (Aldashev and Verdier, 2010). Second, national NGOs need time to develop their offers and the practices of their enterprises, and the organizations that only exist for a few years may not have the time to learn enough nor to implement long-term sustainable solutions by responsibilizing beneficiary populations (IRIN, 2014). Third, it cannot be guaranteed that it is the organizations that do the most good that manage to survive. Reasons why national NGOs manage to retain funding from international donors might also be ideological, religious or personal, if employees at donor organizations have personal ties to individuals working for aid recipient NGOs. National NGOs may also qualify as aid beneficiaries because they are good at responding to formal criteria of donors, such as being capable of
delivering well-written reports and evaluations (Thörn, 2016), although they make little actual change come about on the ground.

There is hope among many policy-makers, working for national and supranational public institutions as well as for donor INGOs, that modern development network organizations will function as constructive platforms for information exchange and for elaboration of joint projects, in which all active participants are vocal. This hope has even resulted in direct financial and monitoring support distributed from national development agencies to foreign development network organizations (regard e.g. the analysis of Swedish support to an Ethiopian human rights network by Webb et al (2017)). However, there is according to the above reasoning also a risk that successful development network organizations contribute to re-institutionalizing donor organizations’ presence in aid-recipient countries’ social welfare systems, and to reinforcing competition among both national and international NGOs. The marketization trend in the third sector also provokes a reason to consider whether these networks above all serve as communities that donor and recipient organizations want to be part of for identifying potential project partners. These theme is treated in the empirical analysis below, which estimates whether market trends and competition are differently influencing homogenous respectively heterogenous child protection networks in Burkina Faso.

3.4 A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Homogenous and Heterogenous Child Protection Networks in Burkina Faso

The above chapters account for some of the reasons why development networks are established and why organizations are attracted to join them; for the internal positions that organizations may have within networks; and for the coordination mechanisms that rule them. Conclusively, child protection networks have been institutionalized in Burkina Faso following a globally widespread political discourse promoting interactor collaboration around both operational, ‘case-management’, support to children in vulnerable position and around elaboration of child protection policies and programs. However, the established networks have different member compositions and are ruled by different coordination mechanisms. Applying a critical, development-oriented analytical perspective on traditional management-oriented network theories, it turns out likely that these differences in characteristics produce different intra-network
dynamics. That is, heterogenous networks including both government representations, resource-strong INGOs and national NGOs appear less likely to provide opportunities for the latter to articulate and push for their own agendas within the frameworks of the networks, since competition for development funds forces national NGOs to adapt their services and behavior to donors’ and governments’ demands. Contrastingly, homogenous networks seem less likely to be influenced by hierarchical and competitive interactor dynamics, as their member organizations have similar positioning within the development value-chain and more similar operational objectives. In the section for analysis, the network dynamics of homogenous and heterogenous networks will be explored in order for us to better understand how network member composition influences coordination and coherence among development actors, and how network engagement influences NGOs’ opportunities to political agendas and decision-making concerning policy programs and implementation measures.

3.5 Research Contribution and Previous Research

The primary purpose of thesis is to contribute to increase the somewhat existing, but limited knowledge accounts about the functions and dynamics of development network organizations through explorative, case study research. Most previous studies of network organizations including development NGOs have looked at the rise of transnational advocacy networks, in which primarily INGOs and government institutions are represented (e.g. Hughes et al., 2009; Smith and Wiest, 2005). Thematic areas that have been targeted to help understand the internal dynamics of such networks are for example changes to international networks over time (Beckfield, 2008; Moaz et al., 2003) and policy entrepreneurship within networks (Goddard, 2009). However, few studies concentrate on the role of national NGOs in interorganizational networks, although some accounts have been provided by Menashy and Shields (2017), who write about networks within the global education sector, and by Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydın (2010), who give attention to national NGOs within networks for environmental protection. Though, with exception for Menashy and Shields (2017), most previous studies do not apply the perspective of critical development theory. That is, they do not focus on the dynamics between member organizations holding different positions in a socioeconomic hierarchy, but they rather look at the operational functions of interorganizational networks. In comparison, this thesis does make a clear contribution to the more critical development studies
literature, as it explores development partnerships from an angle that does not seem to have been explored by other researchers. Namely, while quite extensive research has been made on bilateral, multilateral and private development aid partnerships (e.g. Scyner, 2000; Thörn, 2016; Hickel, 2014; Richey and Ponte, 2014), scholars have not yet given much attention to the implications that engagement within development network organizations may have on the relationships between international donor organizations and local aid-recipients. As above stated, these networks may consist of different types of members and have working objectives that are more or less strategic versus operational. With the missing knowledge about how networks influence interorganizational relationships within the development sector in regard, it is of current interest to survey whether national, aid-recipient NGOs may experience increased opportunities to resist the dominance imposed by the international donor society so often mentioned within the critical development studies literature by supporting each other in homogenous network organizations. Relatedly, it turns out relevant to investigate how the interactions between INGOs, national NGOs and even governments, multilateral organs and private actors in heterogenous networks influence the relationships and discourses between partners in foreign aid.

Apart from filling a theoretical knowledge gap, this thesis makes a scientific contribution by focusing on a study object located in a context which has not been subject for that much research, namely the child protection development sector of Burkina Faso. Because of contingencies, the author of this thesis could make use of a particular opportunity to access information in a research setting that because of prevalent security issues and language barriers might have been unavailable to other researchers.

4 Research Design and Methodology

This explorative case study is both theory-building and theory-testing. That is, while being rooted in existing theory, the study is also inductive, as the material has been scanned for new factors that could help us to better understand the interactor dynamics of homogenic and heterogenic development network organizations. The empirical data was collected during two months of field research in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, primarily through semi-structured interviews, but also through participant observation. Recording and note-taking of verbal and non-verbal
articulations was according to interpretative research practice undertaken in order to give expression for the interactor dynamics of the child protection networks as perceived by the study participants (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2006).

Development network theory and critical development theory were combined in a framework for understanding the observed social phenomena. Hence, the subsequent analysis is structured according to themes presented in the theory chapter, i.e. international development partnerships, inter-organizational competition, the relationships between the public and third sector in aid-dependent economies, and the opportunities for non-governmental organizations of various kind to influence policy-making and program implementation. It also includes discussions of induced research findings related to aspects of development network organizations that rarely have been addressed by scholars.

4.1 Case Selection

Burkina Faso is one of the most vulnerable economies in the world, and with roughly 40 % of its population living below the poverty line, it ranks as number 182 out of 189 in the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019). Following, Burkina Faso may be regarded as an extreme case when it comes to donor dependency. In 2011, as much as 98 % of its government’s investment budget was made up by ODA (World Bank, 2019). In 2016, this percentage has decreased to 54 % (Trade Economics, 2019), but unfortunately, the country is now likely to see a backward development trend because of its rapidly worsened security situation. As financial development aid is often earmarked for investments aligned with donors’ ideals and preferences, this implies that foreign policy frameworks have a large impact on both politics and on general societal structures in the country.

In total, approximately 1600 non-governmental organizations operate in Burkina Faso and 75 % of these are occupied with activities serving to protect and to promote the interests of children and youths (MASSN, 2015). The child rights sector in Burkina Faso turns over a remarkable share of the received ODA and in contrast to e.g. the agricultural development sector, it is not ruled by any trade-related interests but almost completely reliant on foreign aid. Altogether, these factors make it both relevant and practically convenient to study organization networking within the child rights community in Burkina Faso. Notably, findings in this relatively unexplored research
context may demonstrate how organization networking can change the opportunities for both small (national) and large (international) non-governmental organizations to influence policy-making and implementation within the global development sector.

4.2 Material and Selection

Probability sampling, non-probability sampling in form of chain-referral sampling (or ‘snowball sampling’) and convenience sampling were used for the selection of networks and organizations to study. Since the Burkinabe state authorities only coordinate one nation-wide child protection network, which gathers practically all big donor organizations and a good number of national NGOs within the Burkinabe child protection community, it was natural to include this network as the primary example of a heterogenous development network organization. In this thesis, this organization network is referred to by the pseudonym Child Protection Network A (CPN-A). According to its coordinator (Network Coordinator A), the network includes fifteen INGOs, nine national NGOs and representatives from different government institutions. Smaller replicas of CPN-A have been institutionalized on decentralized levels in the provinces and in some municipalities of the country. Though, due to the current security situation and access problems caused by the Swedish government’s advices against travels to provinces outside Kadiogo, where the capital of Burkina Faso is located, it was within the conditions of the fieldwork grant supporting the collection of empirical material used for this study not possible to do any deeper investigations of the decentralized networks. However, a brief focus group discussion with six provincial network coordinators was organized during a conference that they attended in Ouagadougou, which provided some material on these decentralized heterogenous networks.

The homogenous child protection network, followingly referred to by the pseudonym CPN-B, was selected because it is frequently referred to in Burkinabe medias as well as in several reports produced by INGOs and by multilateral organizations. Also, this organization network was convenient to sample as the author during a previous internship had gained brief knowledges about some of its member organizations, which facilitated the process of making contact with interviewees. Noteworthy, getting

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3 References excluded for anonymity reasons.
in touch with small national NGOs is not always simple in the largely non-digitalized Burkinabe society, where many people in addition alternate their use of numerous different telephone numbers. Many of the offices of the Ouagadougou-based child protection NGOs are also far distanced from each other and not so easy to navigate to. In addition, personal contacts are in general important. Interviewees were sometimes reluctant to meet me before information about the above mentioned internship was provided, which granted for the researcher’s genuine interest in child-rights issues.

All organizations surveyed were asked which networks are the most important for their operations. Mostly, the respondents then recalled CPN-A and the decentralized networks, and the national NGOs also mentioned CPN-B. For clarification, some of the organizations that were interviewed are part of both CPN-A and CPN-B, while other are only included in one of these networks. More specifically, all of the national and international NGOs surveyed except for one are members of CPN-A and all of the national NGOs surveyed except for one are members of CPN-B. Except for CPN-A and CPN-B, the other networks that were mentioned by the respondents have a more general focus on children’s rights and/or on education rather than on child protection defined as above.

One of the following factors determined the selection of network member organizations that were asked to participate in the interviews:

- The organization was mentioned among the ones contributing the most to child protection in Burkina Faso in a report published by the government’s statistical institute (MEFD, 2017) and in a status report on the development of the Burkinabe child protection system published by the International Bureau of Children’s Rights (IBCR, 2017)
- The organization was mentioned by other respondents
- The organization was known since the author’s previous internship

Most of the organizations that were contacted expressed willingness to participate in the study, although practical circumstances prevented some meetings from being arranged. Only a handful of the national NGOs and the INGOs that were contacted could not be reached.
4.2.1 Interviews

In total, seventeen one-on-one interviews, each of them 40-90 minutes long, were conducted with representatives for five INGOs, five national NGOs, one multilateral organization (UNICEF), two public institutions (i.e., the Direction for Child Protection under the Ministry for Social Protection (MSP), which coordinates CPN-A, respectively, with a public care center for children in vulnerable position), and with the coordinators for three different network organizations - CPN-A, CPN-B and NGO-Union. The coordinator of CPN-A was not accessible in person but provided written answers to the interview guide. Additionally, two focus group discussions were conducted: one with the coordinators for six provincial networks and one with employees at the statistical agency of Burkina Faso, which collaborates with several child protection organizations and bilateral donors. A list of all respondents is included in the appendix.

Ten of the seventeen interviews and one of the two focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed, with the informed consent of the respondents. The reasons why other interviews were not recorded were either discontent or that they started in a spontaneous and informal way, which made it appear inappropriate to suddenly ask for permission to tape. However, all respondents were informed about my research objectives.

The respondents were either directors of child protection organizations or departments, or they held strategy-oriented career positions high enough to represent their organizations at network meetings. Once, separate interviews were conducted with two employees working for the same organization. This was a useful experience, since these persons expressed differentiating, although complementary, perceptions of the networks surveyed. These two interviews also demonstrate the strong person dependency of sampled interviewees on the results of qualitative studies.

The interview guide followed a semi-structured format that would enable reciprocity between the interviewees and the researcher, that would allow the researcher to pose follow-up question based on the respondents’ answers, and that would give space for individuals to communicate by using their own preferred expressions (Kallio et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews also enable focus on issues that are particularly important to individual interviewees and allow for an unlimited variety of perceptions to be expressed (ibid).
The interview guide that was used is included in the appendix and consists of seven question areas that were selected to find answers to the research questions. First, each respondent was asked to explain the goals of their organizations and the approaches that they apply in order to reach these goals. The respondents were also asked what kinds of partnerships they have with other organizations, i.e. whether they are aid donors, aid receivers, or if they have any other strategic or operational partnerships. Afterwards, the respondents were asked about their network engagement, and about the benefits and costs that they associate with it. Then, formal aspects such as member selection criteria, meeting structures, and the network leadership were dealt with, in case any potential explanations of the intra-network dynamics related to these structures could be found within the network management literature. In the later part of the interviews, more sensitive questions were posed. The respondents were asked to articulate how they perceive the roles of different network member organizations and whether they feel that they easily can express themselves and are listened to by the other members. This was followed by questions about intraorganizational competition and about the interviewees’ relative perceptions of the networks as platforms for finding new project partners. Afterwards, the topic of political influence was treated in order to clarify the directions of power flows between national NGOs, INGOs, multilateral institutions and public institutions in context of the networks. Notes were both taken on the respondent organizations sentiments of being influenced by other organizations discourses, strategies and agendas, and of being capable to articulate and push for their own agendas. The last topic concerned potential areas for development of the child protection networks, hence the respondents were asked to identify how the internal functions and also how the role of the whole networks in the larger child protection community could be ameliorated. Before finishing the interviews, the respondents were asked if they wanted to add or underline any particular points of interest.

French was used as the main language of communication with the study participants. Even though my French skills are rather on a professional level than fluent, it was a benefit to be able to communicate directly with the respondents instead of through an interpreter. There may be virtues with using interpreters, especially if one is doing fieldwork in a culturally unfamiliar setting, where discourse is used differently than in the researcher’s domicile. However, there is always the risk that a person interpreting interview questions will reformulate them in undesirable manners, speak more or less...
than what the researcher asks for and exclude interesting content from being translated. However, some potential bias related to my imperfect language skills cannot be excluded. Respondents might have simplified their answers in order to be understood and sometimes during the interviews, interview questions needed to be reformulated in order for the interviewees to understand them. Anyway, because of the openly structured format of the qualitative interviews, I listened more than I was speaking and never found it difficult to understand the expressions of the study participants.

4.2.2 Observation

The original idea was to participate in numerous network meetings of both the heterogeneous and of the homogenous network, in order to observe the interactions between their respective member organizations and so triangulate the interview material. However, it turned out to be more complicated to execute the meeting observations than expected. The heterogenous network, CPN-A, meets once a month and during my two months of fieldwork, I only had the opportunity to attend one meeting. The reason why I could not attend the first meeting was bureaucratic. I needed to submit a formal application to a ministry to study the network and did not get it until several weeks had passed. However, I could fortunately attend another monthly assembly of CPN-A and one meeting of its subgroup working with child protection in urgency situations. Moreover, I assisted and took notes in one CPN-A meeting during my previous internship (although not with the research questions of this thesis in thought). Notably, the topic for the monthly assembly was favorable for this research project, as it concerned the working structures and improvement areas of the network, especially in relation to its four subgroups. The agenda of the attended subgroup meeting was also management-oriented, since the group had recently been formed because of the worsened security situation.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to attend any meeting of the homogenous network (CPN-B) at all, although I posed several requests to its leader (Network Coordinator B). According to Network Coordinator B, CPN-B has assemblies with all members once every three months and between these assemblies, operational meetings take place ad hoc. It remains uncertain whether any CPN-B meeting occurred during my time in Burkina Faso, without me being invited, or if the network’s meeting frequency was simply low.
Conclusively, it would have been beneficial to do more meeting observations in order to triangulate the interview data. However, saturation was reached for the interview material, which was the most important, since the main focus point for this thesis is how different network member organizations experience the dynamics of the child protection networks that they are engaged with.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

All respondents were well informed about the objectives of this study before sharing any information on the research topic. A one-page written presentation of the study was shared in electronic or/and in printed form before every interview. This presentation included a description of the aim of the study, methods used and other details, such as the fact that this thesis is written in English (a language which most of the respondents are not so familiar with), but that relevant study findings would be communicated to the study participants either in French or in English. Moreover, respondent NGOs and networks were informed that the names of their organizations and of individual respondents would be anonymized in this publication. The interviewees that agreed with our conversations being recorded (approximately 60 %) signed a consent form, stating the obligations of the student to respect the confidentiality of information that could harm the operations or the reputation of the participant organizations. Respondents were not rewarded with any compensation.

4.4 Potential Personal Biases

In interpretative field research, physical-spatial and cognitive-emotional objectives do always intertwine to some extent (Yanow, 2006). Hence, personal bias cannot be avoided as a light-skinned, female student from a higher education institution in Scandinavia undertakes field research in a previously colonized and now aid-dependent country in Sub-Saharan Africa. It became evident that it was necessary to thoroughly explain to the respondents that I was doing an independent research project without being affiliated with any national or international NGO, and that the objectives with my project was not to do groundwork for any decisions on whether the specific organizations surveyed should receive more or less funding, but to contribute to increasing the general understanding of development network organizations within a global research context. However, after having explained my research objectives and
that the information given by all respondents would be anonymized, the respondents usually appeared to be willing to answer the interview questions in open and honest manners. Anyway, it cannot be excluded but should rather be expected that some answers have been adjusted to correspond to the interviewees’ expectations of what I or people higher up in the hierarchy of their organizations would like to hear, or that some information was hidden in order to protect the reputation of their organizations (ibid). For example, the difficulties to arrange meeting observations with CPN-B might have been provoked by a fear that sensitive information that would be presented by individual member organizations could leak to other network members or to externals.

5. The Diverse Dynamics of Child Protection Networks in Burkina Faso

In this section, the collected empirical material will be presented and analyzed in relation to existing accounts of development network theory and development partnership theory. The first part concerns the heterogenic child protection network, CPN-A, which includes national and international NGOs as well as and different public institutions as members. The second part concerns the homogenic network CPN-B, mainly consistent of national NGOs. Last follows a discussion about the interorganizational dynamics in the respective networks and the potential effects that member composition has on the coordination mechanisms and the coherence of the networks, and on the possibilities for individual member organizations to articulate and push for their own agendas within the frameworks of the network organizations. The citations below have been translated from French to English by the author. References to the pseudonyms for individual respondents are provided in parenthesis.

5.1 Study of a Heterogenic Child Protection Network: CPN-A

CPN-A is the heterogenous network in focus for this study. Applying the typology for coordination mechanisms of Provan et al (2007), the network is directed by a lead organization, namely the child protection unit at the Burkinabe Ministry for Social Protection (MSP). CPN-A was formed in 2009, in response to the call for establishing a more coherent national system for child protection. The idea was that the network organization, by the time consistent of eight INGOs, UNICEF and representatives for the MSP, would provide a common platform for consultation and exchange in order to create synergy effects in operations and facilitate advocacy work for actors within the
child protection community (Network Coordinator A). The network coordinator explains that CPN-A is:

“the place where public services share their visions and take part of observations [made by NGOs]” with the main objective “to develop a quality protection offer through strengthening the technical and operational capacities of the social services and through improving the capacity of partners to collaboratively manage cases of exploitation, trafficking and abuse by the establishment of [decentralized] child protection networks”.

By this statement, Network Coordinator A indicates that the government of Burkina Faso is open to feedback from third sector organizations when it comes to the formulation and implementation of child protection policies, but that it also has a defined interest in spreading their own visions of the work with diverse child protection operations should be organized. Further, the network organization officially fills a purpose to increase the effectiveness of Burkina Faso’s national child protection system and to strengthen its nodal points with what the Network Coordinator A calls ‘endogenous protection systems’, which implicates both traditional/local community child protection mechanisms and the approaches used by national NGOs and INGOs.

Today, CPN-A includes fifteen INGOs, nine national NGOs and representatives from different public institutions (Network Coordinator A). The network has monthly assemblies hosted at the offices of the member organizations according to a rotation principle. Additional activities which take place in four subgroups: 1) the group for case management; 2) the group for response in national urgency situations; 3) the group for protection of minors in conflict with the law; and 4) the group for protection of dislocated children (that e.g. are subject for trafficking, child labor, child marriage and organized begging). Group no. 2 has meetings every second week, while the other subgroups organize meetings ad hoc.

The interview respondents appear to be positive to CPN-A’s internal system for sharing relevant information to the network members by using a common email list (NatNGO1, NatNGO2, NatNGO3, IntNGO2, Network Admin 1, UNICEF). This list is also used by the network coordinator to circulate the draft of the agenda for every upcoming monthly meeting, to which all recipients of the correspondence may add suggestions.
Several representatives for the member organizations, especially for the national NGOs, tell that they are pleased with the rotating meeting structure for two reasons. First, it contributes to creating an inclusive and pleasant social environment. Second, it provides visibility to the meeting hosts and so contributes to increasing the organizations’ knowledges about the activities of other structures within the child protection community (NatNGO1, NatNGO2, IntNGO4, UNICEF, Network Coordinator 1). Network Coordinator A identifies the opportunity to gain more visibility as one of the major reasons why NGOs want to be included in CPN-A. This is being confirmed by one national NGO, expressing that:

“[the network engagement] allows for the association to be known by everyone [...] If you look closer at [CPN-A], there are [IntNGO6], the public services, [IntNGO7]... Well, a lot of organizations are present, which allows this association to become recognized.” – NatNGO2

However, a couple of respondents express frustration because they perceive that the network members are too focused on gaining visibility instead of working with substantial projects that really matter for their beneficiaries (IntNGO5, UNICEF). They contend that too many superficial projects only elaborated to attract funding are initiated by the network community.

Gaining increased visibility does though bring various opportunities for individual organizations to establish new collaborations with other network members. There are examples of donor organizations telling that they appreciate that they through CPN-A get exposed to potential financial aid recipient partner organizations (IntNGO2). There are also examples of INGOs expressing that CPN-A constitutes a good platform for identifying other INGOs that they can form consortia with, in order to submit applications to bigger calls for proposals posted by multilateral organizations (IntNGO2, IntNGO4). A third type of partnerships are the purely operational partnerships that may be established between any kinds of organizations, i.e. partnerships that do not imply any major transactions of funds, but that serve to increase coherence and accomplish synergies between the field activities of different actors (IntNGO1, IntNGO3).

Both aid donors and receivers mention that their network engagement has allowed them to establish new collaborative partnerships of operational character (NatNGO1,
NatNGO2, NatNGO5, IntNGO1, IntNGO3, IntNGO6). This means that instead of working alone, several organizations have opened up for combining and increasing coherence between their budgets, competences and interventions with other organizations in order to become more efficient and effective. However, none of the aid recipient partners except for one (whose coordinator is assigned on voluntary, non-paid basis) openly disclose that they have any stronger aspirations to get in contact with funding partners through their CPN-A engagement. Though, several reasons indicate that this claim is to doubt. First, representatives for the MSP, the UNICEF and various INGOs contend that a recent inflation in national NGOs seeking membership in CPN-A depends on their endeavor to get donor funding. Both one respondent INGO (IntNGO1) and Network Admin A express that they are currently frustrated because some national NGOs seem to enter the network only because of “surreal” hopes to get more funding, although the network organization according to their views rather serves to provide opportunities for its member organizations to use the resources that they already have in the best possible ways for maximizing impact. Second, UNICEF and IntNGO3 tell that there is evidently competition between the national NGOs in the network, although this is something being denied by the national NGOs themselves (NatNGO1, NatNGO2, NatNGO3, NatNGO5). Denying the prevalence of competition might be a way to avoid the question, especially as the same organizations bring up increased visibility as a benefit of network engagement. Third, all various members of CPN-A express that being a member of the network indicates credibility, as there are certain formal requirements to be included by the MSP. Buzz is now going about donor organizations requiring that their aid-recipient partners should be part of CPN-A for taking part of their funding (IntNGO1, Network Admin A), a topic that reappears further down.

It followingly appears likely that elements of competition are related to the national NGOs’ network engagement. The UNICEF respondent also contends that there is competition between the INGOs, although this is being neglected by the INGOs themselves. The alleged reason why competition would not be prevalent is that no calls for project proposals or any other funding opportunities are administrated by the network organization itself (IntNGO1, IntNGO2, IntNGO3, IntNGO4, IntNGO6). In any case, IntNGO6 contends that there may be power struggles over operational issues, as INGOs often advocate usage of different planning and measurement tools and of application of differently formulated child protection strategies. Howbeit, as indicated
by both UNICEF and IntNGO2, neither the UN organs appear to be non-affected by this sort of competition. Currently, the urgency situation caused by an alleviated terrorist threat, which has forced approximately half a million people to leave their villages and settle in camps (UN, 2019b) has created a power struggle between UNHCR and UNICEF, who would like to apply different measures to help the concerned refugee children.

In line with earlier findings of critical development scholars (Abrahamsen, 2004; Thörn, 2016), the above paragraphs indicate that the resource-cleavage creates a clear hierarchy between aid-recipient national NGOs and donor INGOs within the Burkinabe child protection community. So how does this hierarchy influence the various member organizations of CPN-As’ capacity to articulate their opinions and agendas in the network context? According to many interview respondents, all of CPN-A’s members are officially given voice in equal manners (Network Coordinator A, IntNGO1, InNGO2, IntNGO3, IntNGO4, IntNGO6). However, for economic and political reasons, certain organizations are more confident in taking on leader roles than others. That is, while national NGOs tend to take background positions, big players, especially UNICEF and a handful of INGOs, are the most active in leading discussions and in agenda-setting (IntNGO1, IntNGO2, IntNGO4, IntNGO6, Network Admin A, UNICEF).

“Everyone is on the same level in terms of speaking up, but the small structures do not have the same capacity to influence as the international NGOs” – IntNGO6

“All structures are on the same level. Now, as UNICEF is the organ of the United Nations that coordinates child protection interventions, UNICEF is the structure that provides the most support, but [...] I don’t think that any organizations have positions more elevated than others within the CPN-A” – IntNGO4

“Some of the organizations are more... I wouldn’t say more active, but because of their positioning and because of the size of their activities, they are more proactive than others. I wouldn’t say that they monopolize, but they do always have information to share with the others and it is also related to their mandate. For example, child protection is foremost UNICEF’s sphere of responsibility.” – IntNGO2
UNICEF normally takes the lead when it comes to setting the meeting agenda and according to one of the respondents, they always lead the meetings centered around issues of advocacy work (IntNGO2). According to the UNICEF itself, they are informally sharing the role of coordinating the network with the MSP. Also, the interviewed representative for UNICEF recounts that another informal group (using the terminology of Provan et al 2007: a ‘clique’) consistent of themselves, IntNGO3, IntNGO4, IntNGO6 and one more INGO meets outside the framework of CPN-A for strategic discussions without government involvement. Conclusively, there is as expected widespread segregation among the national NGOs and the INGOs in the network. Though, neither national NGOs nor INGOs appear to be against that the members have different roles and capacity to influence political decisions at different levels of the child protection system. For example, a national NGO contends that CPN-A allows for collaboration between public institutions and organizations like themselves, established in the local communities, which empowers national NGOs to influence the politics of implementation within specific domains, such as education, participation and promotion of the rights of children and youths (NatNGO5). INGOs express other viewpoints of the value in being connected with organizations with differentiated positioning:

“to have both national NGOs and INGOs – even the big ones, the lead organizations within the child protection community, such as [...] – in the same group provides a learning opportunity, because the members have the opportunity to share certain information and even offer education workshops to the other members” [...] “national NGOs often explain situations that are hard to capture at the level of international organizations. This allows INGOs to build relationships for responding to calls for proposals, which may provide funding opportunities. These organizations can form networks, coalitions or partnerships in order to apply for funds together… which also constitutes a mutual learning opportunity” – IntNGO2

“I believe that it is enriching to see people working for the government, UNICEF and the big organizations working on the basis of well-defined strategies, such as [IntNGO4], interact with people working with
implementation in local communities. I think that they all have a feeling of complementarity” – IntNGO4

“Everyone has their own mandate, which they don’t go beyond. Considering their mandates, people know what they are supposed to do and not. [...] Talking about child protection, everyone knows that UNICEF has the largest mandate. When talking about migrants and refugees, everyone knows that UNHCR takes the lead [...] The national NGOs are very useful for reaching out with messages to the local populations, because they are local and closely associated with the concerned communities” – IntNGO1

However, some organizations are more critical towards the internal segregation. IntNGO5 contends that it is hard to criticize the member organizations with the most financial resources, and that although it would have been interesting to increasingly explore CPN-A as a canal for advocacy work, the powerful articulations of UNICEF’s and big donors’ interests make it seem unlikely for them to mobilize enough support from other NGOs to defend advocacy issues that are not on top of the agenda for the most dominating network members.

Interview respondents do not only alleviate the value of making their own organizations visible to the other member of the networks, they also mention that one area of improvement of CPN-A is to improve its capacity to communicate with broader publics (NatNGO2, IntNGO3, IntNGO4, UNICEF, Network Admin A). Currently, CPN-A does not have a strategy for external communication, although the discussion about how the network organization could become more visible in diverse media has been going on for long, not least when it comes to creating a website (Network Admin A, IntNGO3, UNICEF). However, a few respondents contend that there would not be much use in making CPN-A more visible to externals, at least not to have the role of representing its member organizations in the public debate, as the core function of CPN-A is to facilitate interorganizational consulting and cooperative thinking – not to be a vector for influencing the opinions of wider populations (IntNGO1, IntNGO2). In these organizations’ view, members who have a stronger political mandate within particular subject spheres should be able to address external stakeholders on behalf of the other network members. For example, some INGOs are well-equipped to undertake advocacy work towards certain public institutions (IntNGO2), just like national NGOs
often are more apt to raise awareness about certain issues among people living in the local communities where they undertake their everyday operations (IntNGO1, Network Admin A). NGOs who consider that the primary objective with their CPN-A engagement is to get attention from the government may also argue that it is unnecessary to invest in an external propaganda machinery, since the influential government representatives that they want to address already participate in the network meetings (IntNGO1, IntNGO4).

One special point of interest is the NGOs’ different perspectives on the circumstance that the MSP coordinates the heterogenous network. For example, one INGO articulates that it is a great advantage to be coordinated by the ministry, since the public representatives being present cannot avoid listening to and consider the feedback presented by the civil society (although the government may not always act according to the feedback) (IntNGO6). Another INGO tells that the government’s leadership is necessary to balance the power of UNICEF, that in general has big influence on the Burkinabe child protection community (IntNGO3). Other respondents bring forth that the government’s coordination grants a durability which could not be achieved under the leadership of any NGO, since NGOs tend to shift focuses and suddenly withdraw from projects (IntNGO2, Network Admin A). However, one national NGO blames the government for dishonest engagement with child protection issues and holds that the government’s leadership explains why it has not joined CPN-A (NatNGO4).

When asked about the opportunities for the CPN-A members to conduct common advocacy work towards the government, NGOs answer differently. For example, one INGO expresses that:

“it would be difficult for [CPN-A] to be a platform for advocacy work, since the government if so would need to leave. The members cannot make plea among themselves” - IntNGO4

Contrarily, another INGO argues that CPN-A well may undertake advocacy work when it is not the ministry in charge that is in subject for the plea, but e.g. parliamentarians and officials working for other public institutions (IntNGO2). Indeed, references to the government and the state may misleadingly illustrate public authorities as conformed entities, although there is often much diversity and tensions between different state
institutions (Gupta, 2012). The NGOs also appear to understand the concept of advocacy work differently. While some organizations interpret it as making tough statements and putting government representatives against the wall, others appear to have a broader understanding of the concept and use it to describe even softer discussions between third-sector actors and officials.

CPN-A also fills the function to control that both public actors and NGOs act according to existing laws and policies. IntNGO2, the Public Center, UNICEF, and the Network Admin A bring forward that the most important is to make sure that national NGOs and INGOs act in line with national standards. For example, NGOs must not encourage children to prioritize any activities above schooling; they must not function on religious grounds; they may not transport dislocated children with their own vehicles, as this could count as trafficking; organizations providing care for orphan children must have qualified personnel in a number of specified areas; and they need to be able to provide proper documentation about the situations and the care provided to each of their beneficiaries (Public Center, IntNGO2). Though, the guidance to act according to existing regulations is also appreciated by national NGOs wanting to develop their capacity and proficiency.

“[CPN-A] is a platform for consultation, it is not the gendarme” – NatNGO1

Some respondents also say that the CPN-A provides a platform for them to interpellate public institutions when they are suspected for infractions or disengagement (IntNGO3). Namely, the empirical material indicates that the government of Burkina Faso tends to ratify political treaties and accept propositions of interventions posed by INGOs either without aspiring or having the capacity to really implement them (Public Center, NatNGO4, NatNGO5, IntNGO3). Both third sector actors and the Ministry for Social Protection recognize that the Burkinabe government is much influenced by and materially dependent on NGOs for reassuring the functioning of child protection mechanisms in the country (Public Center, Network Admin A, NatNGO2, IntNGO1). Sometimes, this leads to situations where NGOs take roles that the government according to ruling policies should have:

“civil society actors [...] bear tendencies to substitute the state. They should stop and remind themselves that foremost, [child protection] is a task for
public institutions [...] It is important for them to have knowledge about public policies, so that they can align their actions with them” – IntNGO2

Given the MSP’s limited access to resources, CPN-A does not have any budget for financing common projects and activities undertaken by its members. However, the lack of a common budget is generally not perceived as a problem by the CPN-A members, as the format of the rotation meeting structure is cheap to sustain, as well as the basic activities of the network, i.e. facilitation of interactor information exchange and discussions of how to improve child protection systems and interventions. Exceptionally, a few respondents have mentioned that the government ought to distribute some financial resources for the network members’ work with developing and implementing the tools for case management used in the decentralized interorganizational networks, since this particular activity is both time-consuming, strongly connected to core functions of the public system for child protection and requiring certain financial investments for technical aspects (NatNGO3, IntNGO6).

However, neither national NGOs nor INGOs included in CPN-A seem to aspire to receive state funding for their own projects as a consequence of their network engagement. The network engagement may though indirectly have positive effects on their funding opportunities. As already mentioned, inclusion in the network increases the credibility of NGOs to such extent that donors have started to require it from their aid-recipient partners (IntNGO1, IntNGO2), which recently has caused a strong inflation in the inflow of applications for CPN-A memberships. Although it may be positive for the participant member organizations to extend their social networks and to be able to consult actors with a wider range of competences and experiences in problem situations, several interviewees describe that the increased number of members has rendered CPN-A less efficient. In comparison to the early years after its formation, there is today more competition between members to express their agendas during meetings, which causes that discussions on important topics become less profound and more scattered (Network Admin A, IntNGO3). To prevent this from happening, and to make the work with political strategy development more efficient, the MSP plans to create a separate elite network consistent of solely the INGOs and of UNICEF that were originally included in the CPN-A (Network Admin A). Repeatedly applying the terminology of Provan et al (2007), this elite group is a clear ‘clique’ of INGOs in the network who have high capacity to influence the agenda of the wider
Burkinabe child protection community. Nonetheless, national NGOs do not seem to form cliques to defend or fight for their interests within the framework of CPN-A. The reason behind this may be that they are competing for the same funds, provided by INGOs included in the network, and that they hence are more careful to express their opinions in sensitive discussions, and more hesitant towards revealing information about their own organizations to other network members (IntNGO6, UNICEF).

‘Cliques’ cannot only be identified on basis of the member organizations’ available resources, but also of the thematic areas that they operate in. In CPN-A, there are as described four subgroups focusing on issues within different thematic areas. While two of these subgroups seem to be well-functioning, the operations are less efficient in the groups focusing on protection of minors in conflict with the law respectively on strategy-development for interactor case management. In latter, there is apparently confusion around the question which the member organizations of the group are. Moreover, it is according to the MSP a disadvantage that both of the subgroups lack formal structures for internal communication and for organizing their meetings. The ministry suggests that one constructive element of formalization could be to assign certain individuals employed by CPN-A member organizations to be responsible for coordinating the subgroups. Another element could be to set up meeting structures similar to that of CPN-A, which would allow the members of the subgroup to meet on regular basis. Formalized meeting structures could also provide subgroup members with readiness to prepare themselves and their meeting presentations more properly before entering the subgroup sessions, which potentially would augment the quality of the meeting discussions. In the observed monthly assembly of CPN-A, a couple of other aspects of formalization suggested by various meeting participants implied to make the subgroups more autonomous, i.e. to give them a bigger mandate to conduct activities of their own without involving the rest of CPN-A; and to introduce a quarterly cycle of reporting, to push for results and to make public officials better informed about the workings and the recommendations produced by the member organizations of CPN-A’s subgroups. Moreover, one meeting participant also raised the issue that since some CPN-A member organizations are part of several different subgroups, there needs to be some coordination between the groups, so that meeting occasions and activities do not collide.
Regarding the resource-based and thematic cliques of CPN-A altogether, it may be concluded that the network density of CPN-A is fairly low. This could likely be explained by the varying characteristics of its multiple member organizations, who have different access to financial and human resources and who are specialized within different areas of child protection, but also by a lack of organization structures and coordination mechanisms.

5.1.1 Conclusions from Analysis of CPN-A

CPN-A is a heterogeneous child protection network starkly characterized by fragmentation between the different groupings of its members. When it comes to influencing the agenda and the discussions of the network, aid-funded national NGOs have roles much different from those of international donor NGOs. In line with previous theory accounts on development aid relationships, the aid recipient-partners do to large extent seem to adapt their behavior to please the interests of their funding agents. In the context of CPN-A, this shows by the national NGOs taking background positions and keeping low profiles in sensitive discussions. However, the national NGOs appear to reason that although they might have limited chances to articulate and push through their own agendas by their network engagement, the CPN-A membership brings other benefits, such as gaining increased visibility and becoming more credible in the eyes of donor organizations.

Overall, the empirical material indicates that there are elements of competition or power struggles in all categories of network members - among national NGOs, INGOs, multilateral institutions and even governmental institutions. This competition takes different expressions. While national NGOs compete for establishing project partnerships with donor organizations, the competition among the other categories is rather political and strategic, concerning what tools and child protection approaches that should be applied in Burkina Faso’s system for child protection.

However, what becomes evident when studying CPN-A is that organizations motivate their network engagement differently. While some respondents illuminate the value of gaining exposure and establishing relations with other organizations in the field, other accentuate networking features of being able to participate in the elaboration of the strategies and operational mechanisms that rule the child protection system of Burkina Faso, or to control that different stakeholders within the child protection community.
act in line with already existing strategies and regulations. Attempts to improve interorganizational coordination and coherence through establishing operational partnerships, avoiding overlapping interventions, streamlining working methods, and sharing information and experiences appear to be important for both national and international NGOs.

5.2 Study of a Homogenous Child Protection Network: CPN-B

CPN-B was established by four of its member organizations in 2007 to facilitate the organizations’ case management of children in vulnerable position. Since organizations have specialized competences, they must be able to redirect children whose needs they cannot satisfy to other third-sector organizations. CPN-B is coordinated by a network administration organization (NAO), directed by an elected president (Network Coordinator B) heading one of the member organizations (NatNGO6). The NAO meets on monthly basis, while meetings with representatives for all member organizations are organized ad hoc. Member organizations of CPN-B express that there is an open atmosphere in these meetings, which provides them all with opportunities to raise issues that they think are of importance, although the more experienced and the richer national NGOs included may have the final say in in common decision-making (NatNGO4, IntNGO5, Network Coordinator B).

According to the Network Coordinator B, the network formally includes seventeen member organizations, whose primary objective is to provide concrete support for children in vulnerable position (definition provided in chapter 2). This support consists of providing facilities such as housing, healthcare, psychological support, vocational training, payments of school fees, assistance in getting identity documents, assistance for dislocated children to get in contact with their parents, provision of basic requisites etc. Out of the organizations surveyed, four of the national NGOs (NatNGO 1 to 4), one of the INGOs (IntNGO5)\(^4\) and the public center for residence, care and education of

\(^4\) IntNGO5 is a local branch of an organization established in several countries. In contrast to the other INGOs surveyed, this organization is not a financial aid-donor, but a recipient of foreign aid, whose strategies and activities to a major part are locally elaborated by its employees in Burkina Faso. In this regard, IntNGO5 shares many characteristics with the national NGOs.
children in vulnerable position are members of the homogenic child protection network. With exception for the Public Center, all members are donor-dependent.

All of the organizations that are formally included in the network are not active, because over the last few years, multiple national NGOs have been forced to end their activities for financial reasons. Budget deficits among the remaining members also hinders CPN-B itself from operating ideally (Public Center; Network Coordinator B; NatNGO1, NatNGO3, NatNGO4). Now, some interviewees declare that all members cannot even afford to pay the transport for coming to network meetings (Network Coordinator B, NatNGO4). In spite that the members of CPN-B pay an annual membership fee, the network organization revenues are too small to cover any larger common projects. This appears to be the reason why CPN-B is currently not so vocal in the public debate or active campaigning for ameliorated child protection support towards public institutions.

“We have already made the president make a vow, we have made some noise, and now we do not have the resources to continue. You see? It is necessary to have resources to be able to continue the activities at a certain level” – Network Coordinator B

Notably, it costs to receive attention both from medias and from public decision-makers in Burkina Faso. Advocacy work is conventionally performed through organizing conferences or events to which public officials are invited, and when hosting such events, third sector organizations are expected to pay for both conference halls, food and beverages, and private transportation for public officials addressed, etc. (NatNGO2). Moreover, the direct costs and labor costs for communication related to campaigns may be high in a both hierarchical and limitedly digitalized society, where decision-makers often expect to receive personal visits by attention-seekers. Howbeit, a successfully conducted advocacy campaign was conducted by CPN-B under the lead of IntNGO5 in 2017 and took the shape of a white paper. Printed in the form of a booklet, the paper aimed to give attention to the violence victimizing children in Burkina Faso and to measures that could be applied to prevent it. The campaign was financed by the European Union, and a number of European bilateral aid agencies and received much attention by both parliamentarians and by the civil society and provoked a new dedication among politicians in Burkina Faso to take responsibility for the issue of child protection (IntNGO5).
Currently, CPN-B does not receive any financial support from the government nor from any bilateral or multilateral institutions. This means that its activities are entirely covered by the member organizations themselves, although many of them are in vulnerable economic positions. Many concerned respondents articulate that CPN-B needs to work on a budget in order to function properly and also for being able to take on more advanced projects (Network Coordinator B, Public Center, NatNGO1, NatNGO4, IntNGO5). Some organizations suggest that the best solution would be to allocate more resources from external donors to the network itself, while others believe that the member organizations primarily need to reassure their individual access to financial resources:

“Talking about [CPN-B], I think that in order to become stronger, it is necessary to think more about the resources. You see, the member organizations need to get out of their difficulties [...] And that demands not only an effort made on a level including all member organizations, but... for example, I have my problem and I need to find a solution to it!”

– NatNGO1

“If [the members of CPN-B] could make common applications for international projects, that would be something good and solid which could help to attain the objectives [of the network]”

– NatNGO3

“I believe that the work [of CPN-B] could get better, but after all, it is a matter of money. If we had the money, things would happen, because we know what each organization is capable of doing. So, if money was injected in the organizations, it would start a movement and make everything go well”

– Network Coordinator 1

However, attempts made by the board of CPN-B to seek financing have lately not been successful. The interview material indicates three reasons for this:

1) That the donor community, including UNICEF, prefers to delegate the responsibility for giving financial support to national NGOs to the government of Burkina Faso. However, few transactions seem to reach civil society organizations (Network Coordinator B, UNICEF, IntNGO5).

2) That it contemporarily is unpopular to support network organizations, as their activities do not generate numerable results that look good in written project
evaluations, but soft values such as increased participation in elaboration of political strategies and programs (IntNGO5, NGO-Union).

3) That the vulnerable children in focus for the work of CPN-B’s member organizations, which often are young boys, are discriminated by donors, who largely focus on supporting females (NatNGO4, IntNGO5).

Here, NatNGO4 also expresses discontent with Network Coordinator B, blaming him for not being enough engaged with coordinating funding applications and for personally having overreached earlier funding opportunities. Notably, CPN-B does not have any salaried staff, but functions by the voluntary efforts made by its members organizations. The current network coordinator of CPN-B admits that he sometimes down-prioritizes tasks related to CPN-B in favor for work for the organization that he is employed by.

“I am volunteering for [CPN-B]. The volunteering is a model which does not function since way back. I receive my salary from [NatNGO6]. Alright, you understand? Sometimes, people try to contact me as the head of [CPN-B], but they find me being occupied with my work for [NatNGO6], because that’s what pays my salary!”

The network coordinator himself and other member organizations (NatNGO1, NatNGO4) identify recruiting paid staff as a measure for increasing the functionality of the network. Potentially, recruitment of a network coordinator who is not affiliated with any of the member organizations could also be constructive for delimiting spill-over of particular organizations’ interests on decisions made by the network coordinator, as expressions of some interviewees indicate that this is sometimes a problem (NatNGO4, IntNGO2).

The member organizations of CPN-B all say that they have established new operational partnerships with other organizations in the network through their engagement there. However, these partnerships do not appear to include making joint applications for funding. Rather, they imply that organizations start to communicate more with each other in order to provide more holistic support to their common beneficiaries. Regarding applications for funds, NatNGO4 contends that they are the only organization showing interest in making project proposals in coalition with the other network members. Occasionally, they share information about calls for proposals with
other CPN-B members, but usually without getting response. NatNGO4 believes that this partly is caused by national NGOs’ unwillingness to participate in the time-consuming work of making project applications, and partly because of competition between network members, who according to NatNGO4 do not often willingly share detailed information about their projects. However, NatNGO4 claims that it is absolutely necessary for national NGOs to apply for project funding together in order to survive in the long run. As big donor organizations often pose requirements that aid recipient organizations should be able to turn over big amounts of money, most national NGO cannot apply to conduct projects independently. The cleavage between the budgets of international NGOs being part of ‘the dollar economy’ (– a phenomenon well described in Krishna and Nederveen Pieterse (2008)) and national NGOs with local staff paid in West-African franc makes it even harder for national NGOs to prove their credibility (NatNGO4). NatNGO3 also regard it as necessary to make joint project applications for national NGOs to get funding, but likewise identifies elements of non-persistence in this system:

“There are projects that you are supposed to apply to in coalition with other organizations. So, as you see there are many NGOs that finally... or well, there are many networks that finally die because they come together to respond to calls for proposals, but when the projects end and there is no continuation, all organizations withdraw from the collaborations”

– NatNGO3

The topics of national NGOs adapting their societal interventions to donors’ project proposals and the fashion-driven aid-community are also brought up and criticized by NatNGO4, that refers to the project proposals as ‘appelations touristiques’ (Eng: ‘touristic calls for proposals’). This is much in line with the critique of Thörn (2016), presented in the theory chapter.

So, if the above is accurate, development network organizations only serving to facilitate formulation of project applications may be temporary, as member organizations lose interest for them when funding opportunities emanate. What is then the reason behind CPN-B’s persistence? All respondents tell that the primary reason for their engagement within CPN-B is that it increases the efficiency and efficacy of their case management. Second, the network has existed for long and is fairly recognized within the child protection community. It may be that new national NGOs
continue to apply for memberships because being part of the network signalizes credibility. A third reason may be the formalized structure of the network. The member inclusion procedure, the membership fee, the appointment of the network administration organization etc. contribute to re-institutionalizing the network and might increase the threshold for exit of members. Network density is relatively high in CPN-B, since the similar traits of the national NGOs included creates a sentiment of closeness and fellowship between them, and since the operational objective to collaborate around case management naturally creates ties between the organizations. However, four founding members which still all remain in the networks form a clique, as they are more engaged with and have more influence over the network activities.

When it comes to relationships with Burkinabe public institutions, the member organizations of CPN-B take divergent stances. In general, the member organizations express that they through CPN-B historically have received opportunities to have constructive dialogues with public decision-makers concerning child protection policies. All member organizations agree that the civil society is needed for gap-filling where the state does not succeed in providing protection to its citizens, but only some organizations are willing to do this in close collaboration with the social services (NatNGO1, NatNGO2, NatNGO3, NatNGO5), as others prefer non-interference from what they perceive as corrupt and dysfunctional public institutions (NatNGO4). The matter has become even more sensitive since the government of Burkina Faso in 2018 started a major intervention to replace thousands of children living in the streets of Ouagadougou in care centers and families. CPN-B, which includes members who have decades of experience of working with the subject issue, did initially support the government in taking on a similar intervention. However, when the public social services started to gather street children without engaging the third sector organizations in the operations - sometimes using violence and without having defined plans of how to sustainably reinsert the children in safe environments, which caused that many of the touched children soon returned to the streets – many organizations were frustrated by the sentiment that their expert consulting was not respected by the authorities. Network Coordinator B expresses strong discontent towards the still ongoing operation:

“[CPN-B] is not part of this operation [...] We are not supporting the methods they are using for making the children leave the streets and all
the violence that they are using [...] When we wanted to share our advice, based on our experiences, they refused to listen to us and hence, so we withdrew. We will not support something that will not work.”

However, other organizations indicate that it is positive that the government now at least does something to prevent that children get stuck in street life, and that the third sector should continue to share their expertise with the government, not least because it primarily is the responsibility of the government to monitor child protection systems:

“You cannot be ready for something – you need to start! Then, where you see the gaps, you fill it. And after all, it’s the... how do you say? It’s up to the government to protect all children in the country!” [...] They may have some gaps, but the gaps we’ll fill. We are a developing country, we can’t have everything perfect. But at least something is being done” – NatNGO2 (originally in English)

However, the same organization also recognizes problematics with government collaborations:

“So, if the government takes the lead and now asks NGOs to support them economically... It is true that it can be a problem to receive this kind of support. They just want you to come and give you the money and sit and often you don’t even know what they do with the money. But I really think that it’s up to them protect children and that’s why I like the initiative.”
– NatNGO2 (originally in English)

More respondents state that it is both necessary and productive to collaborate with the government, but that it would be constructive if the public authorities of Burkina Faso could support national NGOs with funds for the services that they are providing instead of relying on the ability of third sector organizations to receive funds from abroad (NatNGO4). Hence, instead of utilizing the services of third sector organizations for free (as described by Aronoff and Kubik, 2015) the authorities could formally delegate responsibilities for child protection to national NGOs, e.g. through financially supporting network organizations as CPN-B (NatNGO4).
5.2.1 Conclusions from Analysis of CPN-B

Overall, the member organizations of CPN-B seem to believe that the network has a concrete and constructive purpose: to collaborate in case management and connect children in vulnerable situations with instances that can provide materials and services that match their individual needs. When the network has been awarded financing from bilateral and multilateral institutions, CPN-B has even been able to accomplish advocacy work which has been acknowledged by some of the highest political institutions in Burkina Faso. Without joining their forces, most of the national NGOs included in the CPN-B would probably not have been able to take such action. Unfortunately, though, several of the CPN-B members struggle with severe economic constraints, which cushions the activity of the network. In practice, this implies that implementation of collaborative projects is hampered by insufficient budgets; that some members cannot afford the transportation costs to attend network meetings; and that some member organizations fully disperse when foreign donors end their project support. Also, there appears to be financial competition between the network member organizations, as they aspire to get funding from the same donors. This currently prevents CPN-B from providing good ground for national NGOs to make common applications for project funding.

All interviewees state that they feel that there is room for them to articulate the perspectives and agendas of their organizations in the context of CPN-B, although a clique of pioneer NGOs have the strongest mandate to influence the decision-making taking place within the network. Also, the network coordinator possesses an influential position, which is criticized by some respondents, although he has been democratically elected to run the network’s NAO.

The public authorities of Burkina Faso do not seem to have a large influence on the activities of CPN-B. Rather, member organizations of the homogenous network have proved that they are willing to make attempts to influence government politics by accumulated strength. Earlier such attempts have been successful to different extent. However, most network members express that they consider it being of high importance to retain a good relationship with the government and avoid further confrontations in order to be included in future policy elaboration and implementation.
6. Understanding the Dynamics of Homogenous and Heterogenous Child Protection Networks in Burkina Faso

Now to discuss how the analysis of the collected empirical material helps answering the research question, asking what the internal dynamics, i.e. the coordination mechanisms, the coherence and the possibilities for various members to articulate and push for their own agendas, in organization networks within the child protection sector in Burkina Faso are, and which factors influence these dynamics. The discussion about how interorganizational network dynamics can be understood is both guided by references to the scholarly literature presented in the theory chapter and to induced fieldwork findings.

Noteworthy, the interorganizational networks surveyed in this study were created to fulfill different objectives. While the CPN-B serves to facilitate case management through smoothening the operational infrastructure between national NGOs engaged with child protection, CPN-A is a platform where both national and international child protection organizations can share experiences with each other and give input to policy-makers working with strategic development of the child protection system in Burkina Faso. Not only the objectives, but also the coordination mechanisms differ between CPN-A and CPN-B. Applying the typology of Provan and Kenis (2008), the heterogenous network is governed by a lead organization, the MSP, that has assigned Network Coordinator A as responsible for coordinating CPN-A. Contrastingly, the homogenous network is governed by a network administration organization (NAO), directed by Network Coordinator B. Though, it does not appear like the formal governance mechanisms create much of a difference, as personal dependency on the network coordinators is big within both CPN-A and CPN-B. That is, the network leaders use their social skills to (with different success) achieve efficiency and productivity in the meetings and to motivate members to engagement. What seems to matter more for the functionality of the networks than exactly what coordination mechanism is applied is the existence of any kinds of formal structures. Assigned leadership, more or less formalized meeting structures and some regulations determining which organizations may enter the networks allow for interactions between member organizations within a predetermined framework. A comparison can be made with the two dysfunctional subgroups of CPN-A, which suffer from not being ruled by any formal structures. They experience difficulties to achieve
interorganizational interaction because of non-existent leadership, and followingly difficulties for member organizations to grow expectations on the network collaboration.

However, even if formal coordination mechanisms exist, they are sometimes out-performed by informal structures of leadership. The studies of the heterogenous and the homogenous networks hence support the statement that relationships between NGOs and formal authorities are ambiguous (Fisher, 1997). Even though both CPN-A and CPN-B are characterized by formal structures, the boundaries between their members are in some respects still blurred because of the different stakeholders’ asymmetric access to resources giving them mandate to influence decision-making. For example, CPN-A is starkly influenced by UNICEF and less than a handful of financially powerful INGOs. When it comes to advocacy work, even the activities of CPN-B are ruled by the agendas of organizations with budgets big enough to occasionally finance common network projects.

Considering aspects of density and centrality in CPN-A respectively in CPN-B, the homogenous network organization seems to be much denser and less fragmented than the heterogenous. The empirical material indicates that this could be explained by: 1) the diversity between the member organizations of CPN-A, which creates difficulties or less reasons to collaborate; 2) the fact that CPN-B has fewer members than CPN-A, which facilitates internal communication and coordination; and 3) the different objectives of CPN-A and CPN-B, of which the latter are more practically oriented than the precedent. That is, the similar traits of the national NGOs included in CPN-B creates a sentiment of closeness and fellowship between them, and the operational objective to collaborate around case management naturally creates ties between the organizations. However, a clique of more influential NGOs is still found within CPN-B. In CPN-A, the density is lower because of the varying characteristics of its many member organizations. Several respondents contend that as being included in CPN-A indicates credibility in the eyes of donors, many national NGOs have recently joined the network, which has caused higher communication costs and decreased network efficiency. Although, the establishment of connections between national NGOs and more resource-powerful organizations also appears to be appreciated by respondents, contending that the heterogenic network contributes to increasing complementarity between diverse Burkinabé child protection organizations.
The aim of the heterogenous network, which is to allow for participation in the development of child protection strategies and tools, separate members with different interest spheres into decentralized subgroups. Several cliques can be identified both on basis of the member organizations’ available resources and on basis of the thematic areas that they operate in. Most important, there is one resource-based elite clique consistent of influential INGOs, which according to the MSP will form a separate organization network, from which national NGOs will be excluded in order to make its policy-oriented work more efficient. Potential reasons why cliques of national NGOs are not prevalent within CPN-A may be that they are competing for the same funds and that they in the presence of donors are more careful to express their opinions in political discussions.

CPN-B has long experience of making common media statements and conducting joint advocacy campaigns. This implies that the homogenous network has a relatively clear and conformed position in relation to external actors interfering with child protection issues in Burkina Faso. Contrastingly, the members of CPN-A do not usually speak with one voice for influencing public opinion or political decision-makers. Whatsoever, there is an ongoing discussion whether CPN-A should become more visible in the medias and whether its members should start to use a more similar discourse in order for child protection issues to appear more comprehensible and gain more ground at the Burkinabe political arena. The uses of such initiatives to increase conformity and to try to achieve more consensus are contentious, as they if realized would imply a partial loss of autonomy for the NGOs included in the network (Brown and Keast, 2003). As the MSP coordinates CPN-A, perceptions of the third sector’s role to interpellate public authorities could also get disrupted. Moreover, increased external communication could misdirect the focus of CPN-A in a way to down-prioritize projects serving the primary interests of children in vulnerable position in favor for the promotion of smaller but more medial projects with less sustainable impact.

Valid for both CPN-A and for CPN-B is that the network organizations normally do not have any budgets of size to spend on common activities. For the CPN-A members, the lack of a common budget is not generally perceived as a problem, as the format of the rotation meeting structure is cheap to sustain and as the purpose of the network collaboration does not implicate any mandatory expenditures. Anyway, a few INGOs wish that the government of Burkina Faso could give some financial support to the
network members’ ‘on-demand’-work with developing and implementing tools for case management used in interorganizational networks on decentralized level. This work could constitute an example of a government capitalizing on the resources of NGOs without accurately adjusting to their agendas (Aronoff and Kubik, 2015). When it comes to CPN-B, the vulnerable financial situations of several network member organizations cause partial paralysis of CPN-B, which cannot actually afford to continue its advocacy work.

Though, network engagement appears to bring ings other virtues to national NGOs than potential opportunities to participate in advocacy work. One commonly alleviated benefit for organizations participating in networks is that it contributes to their organization branding. Moreover, they get the opportunity to share not only good practices and information, but also risks (Brown and Keast, 2003). However, the national NGOs in the two networks surveyed do not seem to work with common risk-taking neither when it comes to political influence nor applications for project funds. Potentially, the explanation for this could be distrust in other organizations’ capacities and/or a sentiment of competition among the national NGOs, which is reinforced as observations are made of organizations that disperse when their funding from international donors dry up as time-limited projects end (Thörn, 2016). The renegade of members in CPN-B is as observed disastrous for its functionality and influences the internal dynamics of the network to be more characterized by infidelity. Oppositely, CPN-A has recently experienced a large growth in the number of members, which partly is positive as it allows for more interorganizational connections to be made, but which also creates more fragmentation between members and blurs the focus of the network.

Just in line with existing theory, it appears as hierarchical elements of political procedures may not simply be shifted away by the establishment of interorganizational networks (Fisher 1997; Hudson 2004). This case study shows two examples of networks that according to the survey respondents have positive effects on the field operations of less resource-strong national NGOs, both in terms of increasing their efficiency through providing ground for them to establish fruitful operational partnerships with other organizations, and through creating more coherence between actors by increasing national NGOs’ knowledges about policies and regulations. Although, it seems like national NGOs either 1) do not aspire to use the networks as
platforms for influencing decision-makers on national and international level (because of financial or ideological reasons) or 2) do not have the financial and social capital needed to do so. In any case, it would be inaccurate to blame the MSP for having created CPN-A as a superficial charade of third sector participation in public decision-making similar to the networks described by Hudson (2009, cited in in Baker et al, 2011), as the government of Burkina Faso is evidently dependent on NGOs for delivering welfare services to its citizens. Several respondents alleviate the problematic that the Burkinabe government ratifies many international treaties without having enough financial and structural capacity to comply with them, which increases the burden on (but also the political power of) NGOs. The power balance between the international donor society, including UNICEF, and the public authorities hence creates a situation somewhat opposed to the hypothesis of Aronoff and Kubik (2015), projecting that either governmental top-down or third-sector bottom-up governance arise within interorganizational networks. That is, the public authorities’ presence in CPN-A does not seem to restrain INGOs from articulating and pushing for their agenda in the network context. Oppositely, it likely increases the chances that field experts’ advice on subject issues are given attention by public decision-makers. Though, national NGOs seem to have only background positions in the network, being careful with articulating stronger criticisms as they could risk being excluded from the group or miss out on opportunities to receive financial support from donor INGOs. Conclusively, money allows for action, and national NGOs cannot afford to change public opinion without the support from donors with predetermined agendas. This observation is in line with Mohan and Stokkes’ (2008) theory about the donor society’s sometimes misleading ‘politics of localization’. Even if donor organizations establish partnerships with national NGOs, and even if the latter are included in networks serving to engage third sector organizations in policy-making discussions, it is not evident that the national NGOs are really given voice and ownership of finding solutions to local issues.
7. Concluding Remarks

This thesis connects two research fields that are both criticized for being vaguely delimited: development studies and network organization theory. Still though, the frequent referral to the benefits of increasing cohesion, collaboration and coordination between actors within various fields in contemporary development policies makes it relevant to investigate what actual effects network organizations cause in physical localities. This study contributes with insights in the child protection sector in Burkina Faso. While considering the research findings, it is important to bear in mind the preconditions of the research setting. Development network organizations within the child protection sector of Burkina Faso were studied as examples of structures operating within an extremely foreign-aid-dependent context. Studies of development network organizations found in other geographic localities and within other development sectors in Burkina Faso may reveal the prevalence of different interactor dynamics.

According to the fieldwork findings, the development network organizations surveyed seem to function as constructive platforms contributing to increased operational collaboration and coherence between member organizations and public authorities; to mutual sharing of knowledge and information; and to increased influence on politics by people (representing both national NGOs and INGOs) close to the end beneficiaries of child protection interventions. However, what comes forth as a not so surprising determining factor of national NGOs capacity to articulate and push for their agendas in settings where they are listened to by powerful donor organizations and national decision-makers is financial capital. That is, without trust in having access to financial capital, it appears as national NGOs within the child protection sector of Burkina Faso neither have the confidence nor the willingness required to claim structural change. Instead, international donor organizations are taking the lead in making the government of Burkina Faso more apt to live up to the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child. Conclusively, without any assigned funding, the network organizations’ activity level is likely to freeze if the resources of their member organizations dry up. This makes it relevant for international donors to consider the potential costs and benefits of increasing their financial support to homogenous development network organizations. Such support would be remarkably different than that of dyadic development aid partnerships, especially in the sense that conditions for
monitoring and evaluation, hence donors’ potential to earmark money to specific projects, would change.

A potential risk that should not be ignored is that the dynamics within child protection networks in Burkina Faso could contribute to re-institutionalizing INGOs’ high influence over national development politics. In other words, while empowering national NGOs and locally established INGOs, the development of public systems for social protection may be omitted or even undermined with an improvement of third sector provision of social services. If so, that would imply undercut prospects for the development of a system for long-term social security for the beneficiaries of these social services, as the funders of particular third sector organizations always may withdraw without notice, and as their projects usually are time-limited.

As stated, few studies have yet investigated the practical implications of the establishment of development network organizations within the social sector. This leaves much potential for future research to explore how it influences state capacity-building, indigenous mechanisms of social protection, and political participation. Particularly, it would be interesting to see future studies of the differences between the interactor-dynamics and functions of networks coordinated by government actors respectively by bilateral/multilateral donors or by civil society organizations.
References


Appendix 1: Visualizations of Interorganizational Networks

**CPN-A**

The heterogenous network is officially coordinated by the Ministry for Social Protection, and informally also by UNICEF. These institutions are represented by the two dots in the center of the illustration above. Closest to the center are a number of INGOs, with much influence over the network’s agenda and activities. There are as well other INGOs with less influential positions included in the network. The smaller dots in the periphery are national NGOs, that normally take background positions in political discussions. Some of them are funded by INGOs included in the network.

**CPN-B**

The homogenous network is coordinated by a network administration organization, consistent of four member organizations. CPN-B’s elected network coordinator represents one of these, illustrated in the center of the picture above. All member organizations have approximately the same size. The grey dots in the periphery represent earlier members that have left the network when they have lost donor funding.
Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. Information about the respondent organization
   - Intervention domains
   - Applied strategies
   - Project partners (financial and operational)

2. Description of the network engagement of the respondent organization
   - Name and description of networks that the respondent organization is a member of
   - Time of inclusion in the networks
   - Reasons for joining and staying engaged within the networks
   - Potential costs of network engagement
   - Whether the respondent him-/herself attends the network meetings

3. Structural aspects of the networks mentioned by the respondent
   - Meeting structure and frequency
   - Criteria for being accepted as a member
   - Coordination structures/leadership

4. Inter-actor dynamics of the networks
   - Sense of power to influence the agendas of network meetings
   - Sense of being listened to by the other members; sense of being able to articulate the interests and the agenda of one’s own organization
   - Member organizations perceived as more active and having more decision-making power within the networks
   - The respective roles of bigger/smaller (international/national; donor/aid recipient) organizations
   - Value perceived to be added to the network activities by the engagement of the respondent organization

5. Financial relationships between network members
   - Sense of potential to find and/or experiences of having found new project partners through network engagement
   - Perceived elements of competition between the network members

6. Political influence
   - Perception of public institutions’ involvement in network activities
   - Experiences of network members coming together for changing public opinion and for conducting advocacy work
   - Likelihood that network activities will change or influence the agendas and working strategies of public agencies and international donor organizations
   - Likelihood that network engagement will render the activities of national NGOs more in line with government and international donor policies

7. Areas of improvement
   - Suggestions of how network activities can become more efficient and effective

2. Points that the respondent wants to add or underline before finishing the interview
# Appendix 3: List of Study Participants

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<tr>
<th><strong>Pseudonym</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
<th><strong>No. respondents</strong></th>
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<td><strong>INTERVIEWS</strong></td>
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<td>NatNGO 2</td>
<td>National aid-recipient</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>NatNGO 3</td>
<td>National aid-recipient</td>
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<td>NatNGO 4</td>
<td>National aid-recipient</td>
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<td>NatNGO 5</td>
<td>National self-sustained</td>
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<td>NatNGO 6</td>
<td>National aid-dependent</td>
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<tr>
<td>IntNGO 1</td>
<td>International donor</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IntNGO 2</td>
<td>International donor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IntNGO 3</td>
<td>International donor</td>
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<tr>
<td>IntNGO 4</td>
<td>International donor</td>
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<tr>
<td>IntNGO 5</td>
<td>International aid-recipient</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>IntNGO 6</td>
<td>International donor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>IntNGO 7</td>
<td>International donor</td>
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<td>NGO-Union</td>
<td>National self-sustained network organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Center</td>
<td>Public center for caretaking of children in vulnerable position, headed by the social services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network Coordinator A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network Admin A</td>
<td>Administrator of CPN-A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network Coordinator B</td>
<td>Coordinator of CPN-B</td>
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**Total no. interviewees: 19**

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<tr>
<th><strong>FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS</strong></th>
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<td>Coordinators of decentralized heterogenous networks</td>
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<td>Employees at the statistical department</td>
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**Total no. participants in FDGs: 11**
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<tr>
<th>OBSERVATION</th>
<th>Representatives for national and international NGOs, UNICEF, the Ministry for Social Protection and one research institution</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants in a CPN-A subgroup meeting</td>
<td>Representatives for INGOs, UNICEF and the Ministry for Social Protection</td>
<td>Approximately 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants in an advocacy meeting arranged by national NGOs</td>
<td>Representatives for national NGOs (both CPN-A and CPN-B members), INGOs, diverse public officials, and journalists</td>
<td>Approximately 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total no. observed meeting participants:</strong> 65 (approximated)</td>
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