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Governance Networks
in Night-time Economies

Thesis booklet

I. Research background and rationale for the topic

Despite its obvious importance in social life, night-time was a blind spot for social sciences. However, in the 2000s, there was a notable increase in the number of works on night-related studies and some scholars argue that "night studies" (Kyba et al., 2020) can claim its own right to be treated as a distinctive scientific field, expanding through traditional disciplinary boundaries (Acuto et al., 2021). There are a number of ways in which the night-time economy as a social practice can be approached: in a substantive approach, focusing on the activities conducted during nighttime hours and the different formal and informal businesses; in a spatial approach of night-time, as it is not distributed evenly across geographical areas; in a temporal approach; and finally, through its distinctive ambience or settings for social interactions.

Given the dissertation's overall public policy orientation, night-time economy should be discussed from a policy perspective too. The night-time economy was not a factor in urban policy, as it has long been regarded as a

so-called shadow economy (Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995). However, soon the night-time economy was increasingly recognized as a crucial driver of urban development and revitalization and cities incorporated the former shadow economy into regular economic flows. While the nightlife of cities has a positive economic impact and relevance in urban economic development, it also triggers certain challenges, like issues with the usage and management of public areas, healthcare concerns, public security issues, inadequate public cleanliness and waste management, insufficient public transportation and so forth (Pinke-Sziva et al. 2019). To address the issues and problems associated with nighttime economies, different – typically regulative – policies have been adopted, which evolved to be more and more complex (Seijas 2020).

A broad variety of stakeholders involved in the issues of nighttime economies, both from public and private sectors, exhibiting different levels of organization. Among these, a particular type of stakeholders can be identified: the night-time advocacy and management organizations. These "night mayors," "night managers," or

"night tzars" Seijas and Gelders (2021) act as liaisons between nightlife establishments, citizens, and local governments, to facilitate consensus-building and networking, engaging and activating stakeholders in local night-time economies to foster broader collaboration.

As the night-time economy has become a subject of public policy, necessitating government intervention and, more broadly, action by those involved in the night-time economy, the governance of night-time economy also received attention in the scientific discourse: a debate on how it can be conceptualized. Scholars have already studied for example urban governance models applied to night-time economy (Seijas (2020; Seijas and Gelders 2021), assemblages as practical arrangements focusing on particular policy issues (van Liempt 2013, Seijas 2020), night councils as organizational arrangements between stakeholders (Acuto et al. 2021; 2023) and the theoretical types of diverse organizations as night-time governance forms (Cibin 2021). Most of these approaches indicate the importance of networks as inter-organizational

cooperation between stakeholders in night-time economies.

For this discussion, this thesis suggests another framework for further investigation into the governance of the night-time economy: the theory of governance networks. Governance networks can be defined as “more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutually dependent actors, which cluster around a policy problem, a policy program, and / or a set of resources and which emerge, are sustained, and are changed through a series of interactions” (Klijn and Koppenjan 2016 pp 11). The theory of governance networks was successfully applied to the study of different policy areas, including urban policy issues. Governance networks theory also provides explanatory frameworks for pointing out relations between network management and network performance based on perceptual data (Klijn et al 2010a; 2010b, 2015; Edelenbos et al. 2011; Klijn and Koppenjan 2012; O’Toole 2015), as well as potential relation between contextual factors of governance networks and network performance

(Koppenjaan et al. 2010; Emerson et al. 2012; Klijn Koppenjan 2016).

II. Research questions and methods

The thesis has two research ambitions, one descriptive and one explanatory. For the descriptive ambition this thesis aims to demonstrate that the theoretical and conceptual apparatus of the governance networks theory is applicable for analyzing the governance of night-time economies. This descriptive ambition includes two areas for the demonstration: the identification and analysis of governance networks in night-time economies and the identification and analysis of night-time advocacy and management organizations as network managers. For the explanatory ambition, the thesis seeks relations between network management activities, the contextual factors of governance networks, and the network performance in a Central-Eastern European context, namely in the case of the governance

network around the night-time economy of Budapest. For the research ambitions, this thesis addresses three research questions.

RQ1 To what extent can the presence of governance networks can be demonstrated in night-time economies?

RQ2 To what extent can night-time advocacy and management organizations be identified as network managers in night-time economies?

RQ3 Do, and if yes how, network management and the contextual factors of network governance influence network performance in the governance network around the night-time economy of Budapest?

Based on theoretical and practical arguments as to why the application of governance networks theory for night-time economy can be an adequate approach, the expectations of this thesis can be summarized very briefly as follows. For the first and the second research question, the expectation is that governance networks will be

predominantly identifiable in the night-time economies surveyed, and most of the night-time advocacy and management organizations can be identified as network managers. The expectation for the third research question is that network management matters for network performance, but also the contextual factors might have influence on the performance. For the relevance of the study, the application of governance networks for studying night-time economy governance could complement the achievements reached in the previous descriptive academic works, also, the framework provided by governance network theory can be extended to a new empirical field.

Methodologically, for the first and second research question, the thesis employs a single respondent expert survey among representatives of night-time advocacy and management organizations. The presence of governance networks in night-time economies is to be demonstrated through the patterns of social relations are understood as the repeated interactions between night-time advocacy and management organizations and actors, and through the

investigation of the distribution of key resources between actors. The night-time advocacy and management organizations as network managers are identified through their position, understood as the presence of frequent interactions between them and other actors, as well as their certain activities in order to guide and manage, facilitate and organize interactions between actors.

The data gathering for the first two research questions is based on an online questionnaire, focusing on perceptual data from key respondents: representatives of night-time advocacy and management organizations in various cities worldwide. A total of 21 cities and 23 organizations provided complete responses from the 71 approached.

The third research question focusing on the influence of network management and the contextual factors of network governance on network performance, employing a particular qualitative case study method: congruence analysis or pattern-matching (Blatter and Haverland 2012). This method is based on comparing and contrasting multiple theories to determine which one

offers a more comprehensive and accurate explanation. It means the comparison of an empirically observed pattern with a set of propositions forming an expected pattern to determine whether these patterns align or do not align. The relationship between the theories contrasted in congruence analysis may be of two different types. They can be either competitive – implying the assumption that only one of the theories may be at work in the given empirical context –, or complementary. In the latter case the assumption is that different theories provide partial explanations that can be at work simultaneously. The two theories selected for testing “management matters theory”, which claims that it is network management that predominantly influences network performance, and “context matters theory”, which claims the influence of the social, political, institutional context in which network governance is carried out. The case selected for investigation the case of the governance network around the issues of the night-time economy of Budapest, more specifically Inner-Erzsébetváros.

The data gathering for the third research questions is based on ten semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants from public, private, and non-profit spheres, including officials of the local council, owners and managers running hospitality and entertainment business, officials of various NGOs focusing on night-time advocacy, representing the interest of locals, etc. The data gathering work based on interviews is supplemented by document analysis, primarily relied on news media articles published on main news portals, audiovisual content published on internet, official websites, social media accounts, social media groups, as well as blogs and other sources.

III. Results and conclusions of the thesis

- 1) In the findings for the first research question, a description of the night-time economies is provided, after which the governance networks are identified in these night-time economies. In 19, out of the 21

night-time economies studied, the presence of some kind of a governance network can be demonstrated, which is a large extent, more than 90 percent. The expectation for the first question, that governance networks will be predominantly identifiable in the night-time economies surveyed, is generally met.

- 2) In the findings for the second research question, first, a description of the night-time advocacy and management organizations is provided, then the identification of night-time advocacy and management organizations as network managers will be investigated. In the case of 20 night-time advocacy and management organizations, out of the 23 organizations studied, the identification of the organization as a network manager was successful, which is also a large extent, 87 percent. The expectation for the second research question, that most of the night-time advocacy and management organizations can be identified as network managers, is generally met.
- 3) In the findings for the third research question, the features of the weak network performance are

confirmed by the empirical findings. For the possible explanations of this, “context matters” theory had a more or less large empirical strength, as the observed features of network performance generally moved together with the features of the network context: where network context was observed to be unfavorable, network performance remained weak, and where the unfavourability of the network context was at least indecisive, the same was observed for the network performance. This certainly challenges the assumptions of the so-called “management matters” theory, as in the light of the result of this case study, it can not be fully considered as a necessary and sufficient condition for good network performance, which seems to be a limitation of this theory.

- 4) Still, the most honest conclusion of the case study is that different theories provide partial explanations that can be at work simultaneously: both context and management could matter for network performance. Network management effort does not prevail in isolation but in the particular local social-political

context in which the actors exist and this context, in addition to the network management might influence network performance.

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V. List of publications related to the topic of the dissertation

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