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## **Non-take-up of social support and the implications for social policies**

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### **Citation**

Reijnders, M. A. W. (2020, June 17). *Non-take-up of social support and the implications for social policies*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/119360>

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**Title:** Non-take-up of social support and the implications for social policies

**Issue Date:** 2020-06-17



# Chapter 3

An analytical framework of  
non-take-up of social support



## CHAPTER 3 - AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF NON-TAKE-UP OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Building on the outcomes of the literature review of the previous chapter, this chapter develops a tailor-made analytical framework to further investigate the phenomenon of non-take-up of social support. It thereby conceptualizes individual help-seeking as a dynamic process that is embedded in the broader context of a multilayered social service system. Furthermore, it defines the position and role of the potential welfare client, as well as other relevant actors within that social service system: policymakers and (representatives of) third sector organizations. As such, the analytical framework provides us with a lens through which to examine the phenomenon of non-take-up of social support.

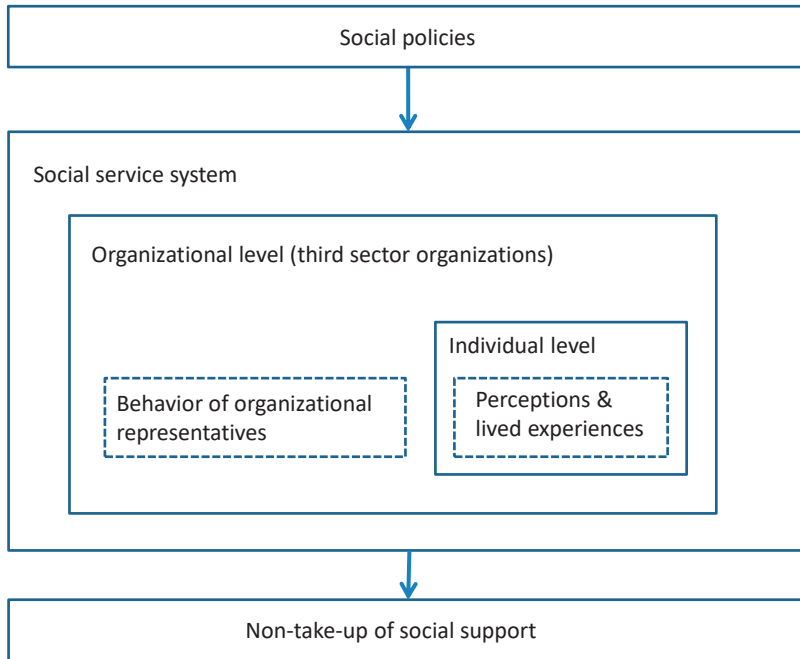
In addition to this analytical function, the framework serves two other purposes: it structures the overarching research strategy of this thesis, and it acts as a heuristic device, as a 'searchlight', to further navigate the different academic literatures and to collect relevant knowledge and insights from those literatures. After formulating the various elements of the analytical framework, the chapter concludes with a discussion of how the framework fits into the broader process of building a theory of non-take-up of social support. Basically, the conceptual work of the previous and current chapter constitutes the first steps along the path of developing such a full-blown theory.

### 3.1. A TAILOR-MADE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF NON-TAKE-UP OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Based on the outcomes of the literature review in chapter 2, the following set of criteria for the analytical framework can be specified: 1) it focuses specifically on non-take-up of social support (in contrast to models that concentrate only on pathways to treatment and service utilization); 2) it encompasses the entire pathway, from social policy design to – ultimately – the individuals who are in need of social support – in particular, the position and role of third sector organizations (and their representatives), as providers of social support services (the supply side), needs to be incorporated into the framework; 3) it conceptualizes help-seeking for social support as a dynamic process that moves from the personal to the interpersonal level, whereby different types of problems and barriers may occur in different phases of the process; 4) it can subsume insights and concepts from various academic disciplines (integrative theoretical orientation); 5) it allows for a qualitative research design, aiming to collect, describe and analyze the perceptions and "lived experiences" (Wright, 2016) of individuals from hard-to-reach populations; and 6) it acknowledges and conceptualizes the various roles and responsibilities of different

actors – potential welfare recipients, representatives of third sector organizations, and policymakers – within the social service system as a whole (*cf.* Van Oorschot, 1995).

The first purpose of the analytical framework is to identify and describe the various levels and actors that are relevant to the phenomenon of non-take-up of social support. An



**FIGURE 3.1:** The tailor-made analytical framework of non-take-up of social support

analytical distinction is made between the individual level, the organizational level, the level of the social service system as a whole and the level of social policy design. Figure 3.1 visualizes the broad architecture of this multilayered framework.

This framework acknowledges and includes the roles (and responsibilities) of different actors, namely: potential welfare recipients, representatives of third sector organizations, and policymakers, in relation to non-take-up of social support. These are the actors that ‘populate’ the analytical framework. Non-take-up of social support is the direct result of the behavior of potential welfare clients and representatives of third sector organizations (*cf.* Van Oorschot, 1996). At the level of social policies, the third group of actors – policymakers – comes into the picture, as they set the ‘rules of the game’ and shape the local social service system (*cf.* Van Oorschot, 1996). Policymakers both directly and indirectly affect the daily lives of (potential) welfare recipients, and set the boundaries within which third sector organizations (have to) operate.

While social policies are considered by some to be neutral, technocratic instruments, they are in fact the outcome of political (and oftentimes *politicized*) decision-making processes. These processes involve value-laden decisions. Policymakers decide who gets what, when and how – to use Lasswell's (1936) famous expression. Eligibility rules, categorizations of target populations, role definition of service providers, policy targets, governance instruments, financial means, etc. are not simply given but actively produced by policymakers (*cf.* Nedlund & Nordh, 2018; Stone, 2012; Starr, 1992). After all, public means are finite, so policymakers have to make real political choices about how to (re) distribute those means. Any analysis of non-take-up of social support should therefore include a close examination of the contents of social policies.

### 3.2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE ELEMENTS OF THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

How one defines and conceptualizes a social phenomenon steers the further analysis and interpretation thereof. As Allison succinctly puts it, “What we see and judge to be important depends not only on the evidence but also on the ‘conceptual lenses’ through which we look at the evidence” (1971: p.2). It is therefore of vital importance to show how each level of the analytical framework is conceptualized. Hence, this section further digresses on the various levels of the analytical framework of non-take-up of social support. Particular attention will be devoted to the conceptualization of the two types of potential welfare clients (type I and type II) as well as the third sector and third sector organizations.

#### **Individual level – Potential welfare recipient**

As depicted in Figure 3.1, the potential welfare recipient is embedded in the broader context of the social service system. The aim is to better understand the problems and barriers that he/she perceives or experiences in his/her daily life and that impede the optimal utilization of social support services. This thesis will collect, describe and analyze the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals who are eligible for social support from third sector providers but who do not utilize that support. However, all potential welfare recipients are not the same, either in real life or at a more conceptual level. To further delineate the target population, this study distinguishes between two kinds of potential welfare clients: type I and type II (throughout the text, they will interchangeably

be referred to as *individuals who are in need of social support, potential welfare recipients, or potential clients*).<sup>12</sup>

What differentiates the two types of potential welfare recipients is their position within the social service system and the purpose of the social support that is developed for and offered to them. First, the two types are separately identified in the Dutch Social Support Act (2015) and occupy different positions within the social service system. A type I individual is someone who is in need of social support to sustain or increase his/her self-reliance. Third sector organizations offer all sorts of support provisions that type I individuals are expected to use to strengthen their self-reliance and to reduce their dependency on (more) expensive forms of care and support. Grocery delivery and shopping services, transportation services for disabled individuals to visit the doctor, debt counseling services, buddy support and home care services are some examples of the many different services that third sector organizations offer to potential welfare recipient type I.

A type II individual is a *nonprofessional caregiver*, a person who provides care and support to someone in his/her social network (e.g., a family member, a friend, or a neighbor).<sup>13</sup> Third sector organizations offer social support services that specifically target these nonprofessional caregivers. Those social support services serve the purpose of building, sustaining, and/or strengthening these individuals' caregiving capabilities.<sup>14</sup> Some third sector organizations offer highly specific services, such as emotional support for young nonprofessional caregivers who are (or run the risk of becoming) overburdened. Other organizations offer more generic provisions, such as practical household services (clean-

12 The term *welfare subject(s)* is deliberately avoided in this thesis, even though it is customary term in other parts of the academic literature (see, e.g., Lundberg, 2018; Lister, 2010; Clarke, Hahn & Hoggett, 2008; Williams, 1999). Yet, the term *welfare subject* is quite reductionist and does not fully capture the identity of the present target population, which is why the other terms are preferred.

13 In this study, the term *nonprofessional caregiver* is used to refer to an individual who provides care and support to someone within his/her social network – a family member, a friend, or a neighbor. This term is used instead of the terms *family caregiver* (see, e.g., Grunfeld *et al.*, 2004) and *informal caregiver* (see, e.g., Costantini *et al.*, 2014). This is not only an issue of semantics. The term *family caregivers* is considered too limited, as it does not seem to apply to individuals who provide care to nonkin, such as friends and neighbors. The term *informal caregiver* is too limited as well, as it excludes any possibility of material compensation for caregiving activities in the form of discounts, products, and other financial compensations, rewards or incentives (think of the so-called *mantelzorgwaardering/compliment*). The latter term also implies that caregiving never incurs any costs, while caregiving may sometimes require (some) financial expenses or other types of costs, such as a loss of income when a caregiver reduces his/her work hours (see, e.g., Arno, Levine & Memmott, 1999).

14 To further clarify, here, nonprofessional caregivers are *not* considered resources or coworkers, as they are sometimes also regarded by agencies (see Twigg, 1989). Instead, they are considered as potential recipients of support services.

ing services, maintenance work, gardening, etc.) or administrative support (e.g., filling out tax forms), that are intended for a much larger target group.

Importantly, these social support provisions are accessible only to nonprofessional caregivers, *not* to type I individuals. This is why an individual has to meet a specific set of policy criteria in order to be labeled a nonprofessional caregiver. In the municipality of The Hague – as in many other Dutch municipalities – this means that an individual must take care of someone from within his/her own social network (family member, friend, or neighbor) for at least eight hours a week or for three consecutive months (Gemeente Den Haag, 2018).

Figure 3.2 portrays the different positions of the two types of potential welfare clients as well as the different purposes of the social support services that are offered to them by third sector organizations.

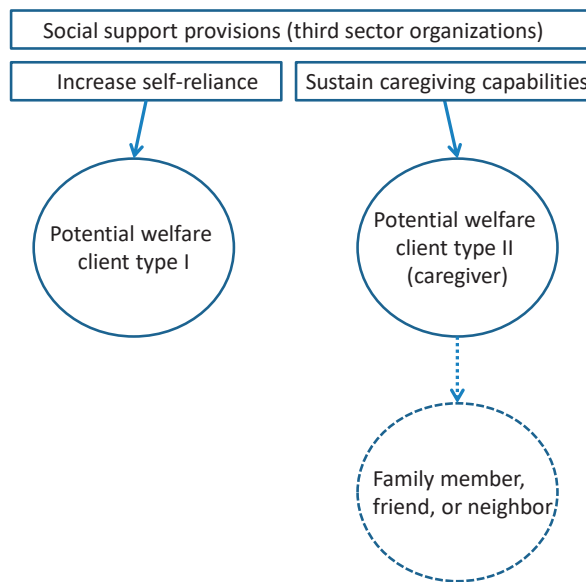


FIGURE 3.2: Visualizing support services for type I and type II potential welfare clients

The next section provides a conceptualization of third sector organizations, which is important for better understanding the particular help-seeking context in which potential welfare recipients find themselves. As already mentioned, policymakers consider the services offered by these third sector organizations to be vital sources of help to, in the case of type I individuals, increase their self-reliance or, in the case of type II individuals, strengthen or sustain their caregiving capabilities. However, many deem the third sec-

tor a rather “fuzzy sector” (see Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters, 2005). Thus, a clear conceptualization is needed and will be provided.

### **Organizational level – third sector organizations (and their representatives)**

Over time, third sector organizations have developed into an integral pillar of social service systems in many countries, as many have observed (Defourny *et al.*, 2016; Brandsen & Pape, 2015; Dickinson *et al.*, 2012; Henriksen, Smith & Zimmer, 2012; Borzaga & Fazzi, 2010; Defourny & Pestoff, 2008; Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Kramer, 2000). They offer all sorts of provisions intended to support individuals in coping with personal welfare problems. Policymakers explicitly expect individuals to turn to these third sector organizations first before seeking other, more expensive forms of support. What exactly are the defining features of this third sector, and how should third sector organizations be conceptualized?

There is considerable academic debate about the third sector and how its organizations should be defined (Alcock & Kendall, 2011). Different scholars apply different labels and suggest different types of organizations, but the basis on which those organizations are determined to belong to the third sector often remains unclear. Below, a definition of the third sector and its organizations will be formulated based on the key literature on the topic. This will be followed by a discussion of the role of and importance of third sector organizations in the social service system. After all, if individuals in need of social support are urged by policymakers to utilize social support services offered by these organizations, it is necessary to have a sound understanding of what they are and what their services actually entail.

### **Conceptualizing third sector organizations – empirical criteria**

First, the ‘third sector’ and ‘third sector organizations’ concepts refer to a specific societal sector that is different from the public, private and community sectors. This particular societal sector harbors a myriad of organizations that offer all kinds of social support services. It must be noted that these concepts carry relatively little meaning and relevance in the day-to-day reality of practitioners or for individuals who are expected to turn to those organizations for help. However, using these terms is by no means intended as “fetishism of the Concept” (C. Wright Mills, [orig. 1959] 2000) or, in other words, for no real reason assigning a new label to a phenomenon that we already know under another label, thereby obfuscating our understanding of it. This study favors conceptual precision over colloquialism, so using specific academic jargon is sometimes an inescapable necessity. Then again, this does not relieve one of the task of explaining particular technical terms and jargon when one deems it necessary to use them. After all, one does not want

to become unintelligible. That is why some of these concepts will be further elaborated upon below.

In the literature, different terms are used to refer to the domain, context, space, sector or sphere between market, community and state, including ‘nonprofit sector’ (Powell & Steinberg, 2006; Bryson, 2004), ‘social economy’ (Stoker, 1998), ‘voluntary sector’ (Wuthnow, 1991), ‘civil society’ (Fukuyama, 2001), and ‘third sector’ (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016; Pestoff, Brandsen, & Verschuere, 2013; Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters, 2005; Goodin, 2003; Fenger, 2002; Kramer, 2000; Evers, 1995; Nutt & Backoff, 1995; Etzioni, 1973).<sup>15</sup> Like many others, this study will employ the last of these concepts, even though the third sector is perhaps one of the most difficult-to-define concepts (see also Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters, 2005) and therefore has been referred to as a “loose and baggy monster” (see Kendall & Knapp, in: Smith, Rochester & Hesley, 1995) and the “twilight zone” (see Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016).

More conceptual clarity can be found in a recent publication by Salamon & Sokolowski, who formulated the following set of empirical criteria to determine whether an organization ‘belongs’ to the third sector:

“An institutional unit – whether an NPO [nonprofit organization, MR], an association, a cooperative, a mutual, a social enterprise, or any other type of institutional entity in a country – must meet all five of these features to be considered ‘in-scope’ of the third sector. In particular (...) entities must be:

- Organizations, whether formal or informal;
- Private;
- Self-governed;
- Non-compulsory; and
- Totally or significantly limited from distributing any surplus they earn to investors, members, or other stakeholders” (2016: p. 1533).

Let us consider these five criteria in more detail. Regarding the first criterion, an entity is considered to be an *organization* when “(...) it involves groups of people who interact according to some understood procedures and pursue one or more common purposes for a meaningfully extended period (e.g., longer than several months)” (Salamon &

15 In the Dutch academic literature, different terms are used to describe (parts of) the third sector, namely *particulier initiatief*, *maatschappelijk middenveld*, *maatschappelijk ondernemerschap*, *civil society* (untranslated), and *sociale economie* (Brandsen & Van de Donk, 2005). The Netherlands Institute for Social Research has a multiannual research program into “Impact of the Third Sector as Social Innovation” (Anheier *et al.*, 2014).

Sokolowski, 2016: p. 1534). The difference between a *formal* and *informal* organization is whether an organization is founded on some legal basis. Note that this distinction between a formal and informal organization is different from the one that is usually made within organizational studies. There, the formal organization pertains to (written) rules, procedures, and other structural aspects, while the informal organization is refers to unofficial social processes, organizational culture, values and beliefs (see Rainey, 2009). Notwithstanding this difference, even though many third sector organizations do have a formal legal basis (for instance, in the form of a foundation), such a basis is not a strict requirement for inclusion in the third sector. As the British National Audit Office (2018) puts it:

“TSOs [third sector organizations, MR] can take a number of legal forms. Many are simple associations of people with shared values and objectives. Many have company status but with a not-for-personal-profit approach. Very many have charitable status or are community interest companies, industrial and provident societies or co-operatives.”

Second, the aspect of *privateness* means that the entity must be separated from government and that it is not directly associated with the state. Third, to be considered *self-governed*, the organization “(...) must control its general policy and operations to a significant extent, have its own internal governance procedures, and enjoy a meaningful degree of autonomy” (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016: p. 1534). Despite having a meaningful degree of autonomy, it is common for third sector organizations – especially those that are active within the social service system – to receive financial support (in the form of subsidies, grants, contracts, etc.) from public organizations (Clifford, Geyne Rajme, & Mohan, 2010) or other third parties (Nutt, 2000). Fourth, the *noncompulsory* criterion means that participation with the organization is without compulsion or coercion. This excludes, for instance, organizations for which participation is based on heredity (family, caste, tribe, etc.) or legal mandate.

The fifth and final criterion pertains to the point that “(...) an organization must be subject to some formal or legally binding constraint that completely prohibits, or places some significant limitation on, the portion of any profit it may generate that it can distribute to directors, shareholders, members, or other individuals” (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016: p. 1535). This somewhat broadens the scope of the third sector, which enables it to “(...) embrace organizations that permit some distribution of profit (e.g., cooperatives, mutuals, and social enterprises), but still restricts it only to those entities that are required by law or custom to place some significant limit on such distribution” (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016: p. 1535). In addition, Salamon and Sokolowski continue, “This means that the organization can compensate its employees for work performed, but is subject

to either a total prohibition, or significant limitation, on any distribution of its profits” (2016: p. 1535). The British National Audit Office further adds, “For this reason TSOs are sometimes called ‘not-for-profit organisations’. A better term is ‘not-for-personal-profit’. In many cases, TSOs need to make surpluses (or ‘profits’) to be financially sustainable.”

### **Third sector organizations in relation to other societal sectors**

Having conceptualized third sector organizations, it is now time to consider how they relate to entities in other societal sectors. Third sector organizations are self-governed, so in that sense, they do not ‘belong’ to the public sector. Furthermore, they differ from market-based organizations, as their goal is not profit maximization and they do not operate under (pure) market conditions. Finally, they are different from community-based entities, or as Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters formulate it,

“while the difference is gradual (as it is with the other domains), it is important to distinguish between small, primary social units (such as families) and larger, more organized units (such as voluntary groups). The latter may operate on the basis of care and trust, but are not based primarily on close relationships between people who individually love and cherish one another” (2005: p. 753).

Hence, third sector organizations are to be distinguished from archetypical entities in other societal sectors, namely, public bureaucracies in the state sector, for-profit enterprises in the market sector, and families in the community sector (Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters, 2005). Note that the concepts ‘third sector’ and ‘third sector organizations’ should not be conflated with the Third Way, a political ideology that was popular in countries such as the UK, US and The Netherlands in the 1990s and 2000s (Theakston & De Vries, 2012; Rose, 2000). One of the crucial differences is that the Third Way refers to a set of political ideas, while the third sector (organizations) concepts are used in this study to empirically describe a specific societal sector and the organizations that populate it. The Third Way is a political-normative concept, while the third sector and third sector organizations are terms that empirically describe a societal phenomenon. Finally, the third sector and family combined may also be referred to as *civil society*. Having said all this, Figure 3.3 illustrates the configuration of the different sectors in society, demarcated by the dividing lines just described.

### **Third party governance: on the role and importance of third sector organizations**

The fact that third sector organizations currently constitute an integral pillar of social service systems in many countries comes as no surprise. As observed by many, the state and its public organizations have externalized the bulk of social services by transferring

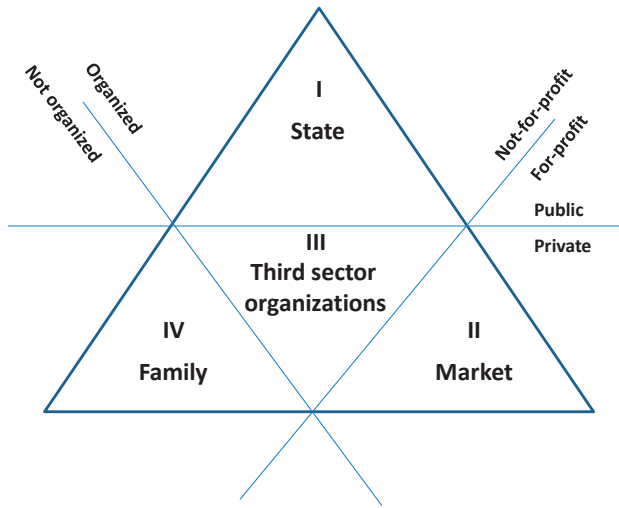


FIGURE 3.3: Societal entities (based on Salamon & Sokolowski, 2016; Brandsen, Van de Donk & Putters, 2005)

important tasks and responsibilities to third sector organizations operating in the social service system. The role of public organizations has vastly diminished in terms of the direct provision of social services, which has fundamentally altered the governance of the social service system. In essence, in many countries, this has given rise to what is generally referred to as *third party governance* (Piatak, Mohr & Leland, 2017; Osborne, 2010; Heinrich, Lynn & Milward, 2010; Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007; Posner, 2004; Salamon, 1989). This boils down to the (increased) reliance of public authorities on third sector organizations for the implementation of social policies and social services. Although this has been a gradual process, it has, in the course of time, produced complex networks of organizations that are – to a greater or lesser extent – involved in the governance of the social service system (see also Van der Heijden & Schalk, 2018). Indeed, as Goldsmith and Eggers point out, “Third-party service delivery models (...) are a central component of the trend toward networked governing” (2004: p.10).

This development has, at the same time, produced new governance challenges. Salamon keenly observes that “the ‘public administration problem’ has leapt beyond the borders of the public agency and now embraces a wide assortment of ‘third parties’ that are intimately involved in the implementation, and often the management, of the public’s business” (Salamon, 2001: p. 1613). This means that “crucial elements of public authority are shared with a host of nongovernmental and other-governmental actors, frequently in complex collaborative systems that sometimes defy comprehension, let alone effective management and control” (Salamon, 2002: 2). This even leads Dubnick and Frederickson to claim that third party governance has become “THE public administration challenge

of our time” (uppercase original, 2009: i1). For that reason, there are ongoing debates about issues of accountability (see, e.g., Piatak, Mohr & Leland, 2017), legitimacy (see, e.g., Taylor & Warburton, 2003) and democracy (see, e.g., Nickel & Eikenberry, 2016) in relation to the phenomenon of third party governance and to the rising importance of third parties.

To better understand the position and role of third sector organizations within the social service system, a network-based approach is adopted here, which is deemed more apt than ‘traditional’ hierarchy-based approaches (see Stoker, 2006; Kettl, 2015; 2002). However, research on networks in the public sector has attracted enduring criticism from scholars due to a lack of conceptual clarity. For instance, Börzel notes the “Babylonian variety of policy network concepts and applications in the literature” (1998: p. 253). Other, more recent reviews of the literature reiterate that network research is still trying to cope with this problem (Lecy *et al.*, 2014; Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007; Borgatti & Foster, 2003). While it is beyond the scope of this study to suggest a solution, these criticisms do compel to be as clear as possible about the network concepts that. This study discerns three types of networks, namely, *governance networks*, *policy networks*, and *service delivery networks*.

Regarding the first network form, “governance networks are entities that fuse collaborative public goods and service provision with collective policymaking” (Isett *et al.*, 2011: i158). Klijn & Skelcher (2007: p. 587) further add that governance networks

“are based on interdependencies, but not necessarily equity, between public, private and civil society actors. They move beyond the institutionalized peak bargaining of corporatism to more dispersed, flexible and, in some cases, transparent modes of agenda setting, policy-making and implementation.”

Analytically, two more specific network types are to be distinguished within this broader governance network. The first is the policy network, which combines two theoretical orientations: one on policy theory and the other on interorganizational relations (Hufen & Ringeling, 1990). Although policy networks are often used metaphorically, in theoretical-empirical research, they are considered a specific class of policy-making structure (Kenis & Schneider, 1991). Following Rethemeyer & Hatmaker (2007: p.619), policy networks are conceptualized as

“a set of public agencies, legislative offices, and private sector organizations (including interests groups, corporations, nonprofits, etc.) that have an interest in public decisions within a particular area of policy (...) because they are interdependent and thus have a ‘shared fate’ (Laumann & Knoke 1987). Public decisions will affect the ability

of all members to continue operations and meet the goals of internal and external stakeholders (Cyert & March 1963). Such organizations constitute a ‘network’ because they communicate intensively about issues they care about and must exchange money, political support, and other ‘resources’ to influence public decisions and – most basically – to survive (Pfeffer 1987; Pfeffer & Salancik 1978).’

Second, third sector organizations are active in service delivery networks, which are defined as

“collections of government agencies, nonprofits, and for-profits that work together to provide a public good, service, or ‘value’ when (a) a single public agency is unable to create the good or service on its own and (b) the private sector is unable or unwilling to provide the goods or services at all or in the desired quantities” (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007: p. 620).

Now that the different types of networks have been conceptualized, the analytical framework, in which the different types of networks are distinguished, is presented in Figure 3.4.

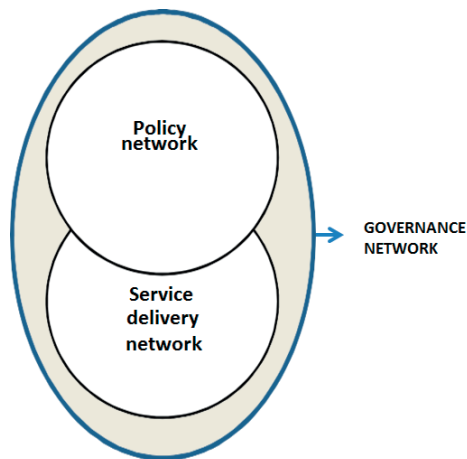


FIGURE 3.4: Governance network, composed of a policy network and service delivery network

Third sector organizations that offer social support are - by definition - active in the service delivery network, but they may also be(come) active in the policy network. They may, for instance, try to lobby political actors in the policy network to receive political support or to acquire other types of resources. Vice versa, sometimes actors from the policy network approach third sector organizations to seek support, or to otherwise further their interests. It stretches too far to speculate or theorize why, how and when third sector organizations become politically active (or why, when and how political actors

would approach them). In any case, whether or not politically active, third sector organizations are an important part of the governance network as a whole. Political actors, such as local public authorities, that are active in the policy network do have to rely on third sector organizations in the service delivery network for the actual implementation and delivery of social policies.

### Summary

Understanding non-take-up of social support requires an understanding of the organizations offering that support. Given the ‘fuzziness’ of the concepts of the third sector and its constitutive organizations, some space of this chapter was dedicated to explain these particular terms. First, the third sector was demarcated as a distinct societal domain separate from other domains – i.e., the market economy, the public sector and the family. Second, the five empirical criteria formulated by Salomon & Sokolowski (2016) are useful for determining whether an organization belongs to the third sector. To be within the scope of the third sector, entities must 1) be (formal or informal) organizations; 2) be private (institutionally separated from government); 3) be self-governed; 4) have noncompulsory participation; and 5) be totally or significantly limited from distributing any surplus they earn to investors, members, or other stakeholders. Third, third sector organizations currently form the backbone of the social service system, a phenomenon known as *third party governance*. These third sector organizations are, however, not only important for the delivery of social services but also may be (come) active in policy networks. Overall, they fulfill a vital role in the governance of the social service system.

This concludes the part on the conceptualization of the organizational level of the analytical framework. The remainder of this section will discuss the two other levels of the framework, the system level and the policy level, and will provide a conceptualization of social support.

### System level – local social service system

As represented by the analytical framework (Figure 3.1), both third sector organizations and their potential welfare recipients are embedded in the broader local social service system. What does the local social service system entail? Building on Andreotti, Mingione & Polizzi (2012), the *local welfare system*, or the *local social service system* – those terms will be used interchangeably in this study – is defined as *a relatively dynamic arrangement in which specific local socioeconomic and cultural conditions give rise to a mix of different*

*actors that are involved in offering social support services.*<sup>16</sup> As Andreotti, Mingione & Polizzi (2012) also note, the local dimension of the social service system is not new, but it has gained more prominence and importance over recent decades in many countries.

Various trends and developments, including several financial and economic crises, changing labor markets, technological developments, the aging of the population, and evolving political ideologies, have imposed increasing strain on welfare states worldwide (see Van Kersbergen, Vis & Hemerijck, 2014; Bonoli, 2010; Borghi & Van Berkel, 2007; Lynn, 2006; Armingeon & Bonoli, 2006; Bonoli, 2005). In response to these challenges, many public authorities have decided to shift welfare systems from the central (national) to the local level. However, as Andreotti, Mingione & Polizzi put it, the local welfare system is

“not to be considered as a simple rescaling of welfare responsibilities to the local level, but as specific configurations of population needs and welfare providers and resources emerging at the local levels. Every element of these configurations looks deeply embedded in the specific feature of each local context and highly interdependent on the other elements, so that it becomes part of a local system” (2012: p. 1926).

### **Policy level – social policies**

Social policies play a crucial role in shaping the local social service system. In designing social policies, policymakers set the legal, organizational and administrative outlines of the local social service system, and they set the ‘rules of the game’ (see also Hasenfeld, 2010; Van Oorschot, 1995). As Van Mechelen & Janssens put it, “At the level of the policy design, eligibility rules and entitlement conditions are set up and the benefit structure is defined. Moreover, policymakers decide on the size of the budget that is assigned to the benefits and services provided, as well as to the administration of the public programme” (2017: p. 17). In other words, local policymakers determine the conditions of all sorts of social welfare programs and assistance, thereby exerting a major influence on the socio-economic position of individuals who (partly) depend on such provisions. Finally, social policies usually contain the (implicit) assumptions and expectations of policymakers

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16 Other, more or less related terms can also be found in the literature: Van Oorschot (1995) uses the term “scheme”, Hasenfeld (2010) refers to it as the “institutional political economy of the local community” and Daigneault (2014) as the “social assistance regime”, and it is also echoed in the “place and space” of the NEM (Pescosolido, 2006). The definition by Andreotti, Mingione & Polizzi is not as broad – too broad – as the institutional political economy of the local community, or place and space, but it is not as narrow – too narrow – as a scheme or social assistance regime. In that sense, it strikes the right balance for the current research purposes.

about the capacity and behavior of welfare clients as well as social service providers (see also Putters, 2017; Wright, 2016; Veldheer *et al.*, 2012; Spicker, 2011).

### **The concept of social support**

Finally, it is necessary to delineate the concept of *social support*. In the academic literature, social support is regarded as a form of prosocial behavior (Bekkers, 2013; Dekker, De Hart & Faulk, 2007). Prosocial behavior is an umbrella term that refers to all types of positive social interactions, including cooperative behavior, helping behavior in case of emergency situations, philanthropy, ‘regular’ helping behavior, and altruism (Stürmer & Snyder, 2010; Penner *et al.*, 2005). The roots of research on social support can be traced back to classical studies by Durkheim, Cooley, and Bowlby (see Alloway & Babbington, 1987). The concept subsequently became embedded in research into related concepts, such as social network, social capital, social ties, and social integration, and thereafter developed into a distinct research construct in the mid-1970s (Nurullah, 2012).

The field then ‘boomed’ and made important progress through works by Weiss (1973), Cobb (1976), Cassel (1976), Kaplan, Cassel & Gore (1977), Cantor (1979), Thoits (1982), Barrera & Ainlay (1983) and Shumaker & Brownell (1984). At the same time, however, this research sprawl generated much conceptual diversity – and, in its wake, conceptual fuzziness (Barrera, 1986). Aside from causing a Babylonian language confusion among researchers, this conceptual fuzziness also stood in the way of an effective translation of academic research into social policies (Schilling, 1987). While in later years other studies tried to provide more conceptual clarity (see, e.g., Due *et al.*, 1999; Thoits, 1995), this did not result in establishing a single, authoritative definition of social support. Today, a myriad of conceptualizations of social support are found in the academic literature.

Since there is no universally accepted, ‘one best way’ of defining social support, it is necessary to clarify how the concept is defined in this study. Here, social support is regarded as *resources offered by third sector organizations that are intended to enhance the well-being of the potential client*. This definition is (somewhat) different from other definitions in the literature. Others define social support as “an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the wellbeing of the recipient” (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984: p. 13; see also Graven & Grant, 2014); as “the social resources that persons perceive to be available or that are actually provided to them by nonprofessionals in the context of both formal support groups and informal helping relationships” (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010: p. 512); as “perceived or actual instrumental and/or expressive provisions supplied by the community, social networks, and confiding partners” (Lin, in: Lin, Dean & Ensel, 1986: p. 18); or simply as “the level

of resources provided by other persons” (Due *et al.*, 1999: p. 663; see also Ekström *et al.*, 2013).

The definition of social support in the present study is more specific than some of the above definitions, as it focuses solely on support services from third sector providers (excluding other potential sources of support, such as a person’s social network). Second, and again in contrast to some of the above definitions, it emphasizes the *supply* of social services rather than the actual use/exchange of them. Last, the *intention* with which services are offered by third sector providers (namely, to improve the well-being of the recipients) is included, which overlaps with Shumaker & Brownell’s definition (1984) but with that element absent from the other definitions.

Furthermore, for analytical purposes, the following four categories of social support are distinguished based on their function: *instrumental support*, *companionship*, *personal care*, and *emotional/psychological support* (*cf.* Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010; Rook, 1987). When someone needs help with chores in and around the house, for example, this type of support is categorized as instrumental support. Help from a buddy, someone who meets with a person every now and then to go for a walk and have a chat, is regarded as companionship. Personal care includes help with getting dressed and taking a shower as well as light medical care. Finally, emotional or psychological support pertains to, *inter alia*, providing guidance, advice and/or coaching to address minor mental health needs. Aside from the different *functions* social support provisions may have, they may also be differentiated based on their *target groups*. As explained earlier in this chapter, this study focuses on two types of individuals who are eligible for social support offered by third sector organizations: type I and type II individuals. Table 3.1 integrates those two dimensions of social support (*function* and *target group*) and provides concrete examples of social support services offered by third sector organizations.

		Potential recipients of social support (target groups)	
		Type I individual: care recipient	Type II individual: nonprofessional caregiver
Function of social support offered by third sector organizations	Instrumental support	Administrative help filling out tax forms with the help of a local community center that offers financial support	Help repairing the house, offered by volunteers on an online platform
	Companionship	A biweekly social activity with a buddy from a local volunteer agency	A holiday to unwind from the daily burden of caring, organized by a collective of nonprofessional caregivers
	Personal care	A social welfare organization offering home care after an individual returns from hospital for revalidation	A home care organization offering help with taking medication
	Emotional/psychological support	An online platform of local residents offering support to individuals who suffer from emotional problems after losing a partner	An Alzheimer's café where overburdened caregivers can meet and receive emotional help from their peers

TABLE 3.1: Examples of social support from third sector organizations for type I and type II individuals

### 3.3. THE TWO OTHER PURPOSES OF THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As well as depicting the relevant levels and actors in relation to non-take-up of social support, the analytical framework (Figure 3.1) serves two additional purposes. As already touched upon in the introduction to this thesis, the analytical framework undergirds the overarching research strategy. This strategy consists of three distinct yet interrelated stages. Each stage addresses a different aspect of the analytical framework, and each stage aims to answer a specific subquestion based on specific theories, methods and data. The three stages combined form the basis for answering the main research question. The next chapter will further elaborate on this three-stage research design. The third and final function of the analytical framework is that it acts as a heuristic device, meaning that it guides our search of the academic literature for the relevant factors that may explain non-take-up of social support.

In other words, it is a tool to navigate the broad and variegated landscape of academic research. It serves to derive relevant knowledge and insights that can be used to improve our understanding of various aspects of non-take-up of social support. The key to understanding a complex social phenomenon like non-take-up of social support is to adopt an integrative theoretical orientation. The analytical framework thereby acts as a 'search-light' that allows us to identify relevant knowledge, insights and concepts from various

academic disciplines that can be applied to gain a better understanding of non-take-up of social support. The downside of this integrative theoretical approach – arguably a downside of any integrative approach – is that not everything can be covered.

While the analytical framework opens up the possibility of including insights from different disciplines that, until now, have coexisted without being connected, the attentive reader may notice that the framework does not include all the levels of analysis that were considered in the literature review. In particular, this pertains to the ‘subpersonal level’ of “genes and proteins”, as identified by the NEM (Pescosolido, in: Pescosolido *et al.*, 2011: p. 59). By implication, this level excludes the academic disciplines of (medical) biology and (the relatively young discipline of) neuroscience, which concentrate mainly on other, lower levels of analysis. Nor will this study psychosomatically measure the cognitive capabilities of individuals, levels of stress and impact on behavior, as other studies do (see WRR, 2017; WRR, 2014; Tiemeijer, Thomas & Prast, 2009). In that regard, it is assumed that such psychosomatic characteristics are normally distributed among the population – similar to what is assumed of help-seeking (cap)abilities.

Finally, the analytical framework is formulated in such a way that it can be adapted and applied in other (follow-up) studies. A future version may adopt a longitudinal research design so that changes over time can be taken into consideration (e.g., to account for the dynamics of non-take-up of social support). A future version may also apply a comparative research design so that multiple social service systems can be included and compared. In other words, the general outlines of the framework are here deliberately kept simple without – it is hoped – becoming simplistic.

### **3.4. TOWARDS A THEORY OF NON-TAKE-UP OF SOCIAL SUPPORT**

The customized analytical framework clarifies the focus of this study, but it does not constitute a full-fledged theory. At this point, there is still insufficient theoretical and empirical material to formulate such a theory. There is still insufficient knowledge about the ‘how and why’ of non-take-up of social support. It is therefore too early to talk about causal mechanisms, to speculate about relationships between variables and to develop hypotheses. Indeed, “full-blown theories do not come up at once”, as Snellen & Van de Donk remark (1998: p. 5). As they state, theoretical knowledge comes in different forms and normally grows gradually. It simply takes time to develop a theory, as many other social scientists also emphasize (see, e.g., Toshkov, 2016; Gerring, 2012; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2010). In this regard, Snellen & Van de Donk (1998) make a very useful distinction between the various phases of theory development.

The phases of theory development that they identify move from so-called *minitheories* to *prototheories* to *embryonic theories* and, eventually, to more or less *mature theories*.<sup>17</sup> The first category entails the specification of concepts that structure the observations, also referred to as “sensitizing concepts” (Snellen & Van de Donk, 1998: p. 8). These minitheories “(...) determine which aspects of the phenomenon we observe are of importance and which aspects we suitably ignore, which aspects are foregrounded and which are seen as background” (ibid., 1998: p. 6). The next phase of theory development, the formulation of prototheories, pertains to the making of factual statements about the phenomenon under study. As Snellen & Van de Donk describe it, “Research aimed at such statements is most of the time of a systematic or categorizing nature. It tries to establish if, and with what frequency and, as the case may be, in which framework, the phenomena concerned occur” (ibid.: p. 6).

The subsequent phase pertains to empirical generalizations, based on induction of the empirical observations that were made. These empirical generalizations can be formulated as hypotheses that may be subjected to further empirical testing. Last, a mature theory is to be understood as “a set of logically interdependent, in particular non-conflicting, statements, opinions and concepts related to a sphere of reality, which are formulated in such a way that testable hypotheses can be derived from them” (De Groot, 1970, quoted in: Snellen & van de Donk, 1998: p. 5). Figure 3.5 summarizes the four phases of theory development.

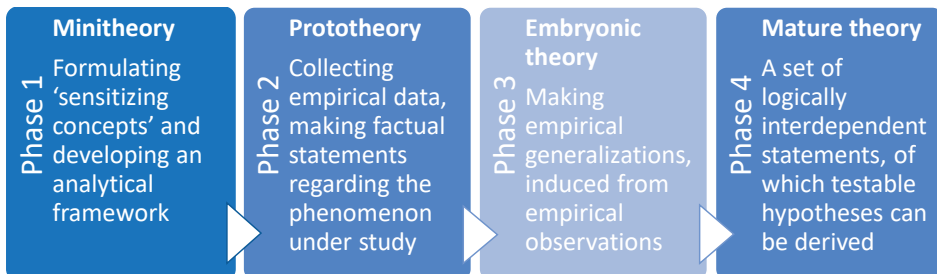


FIGURE 3.5: Phases of theory development (based on Snellen & Van de Donk, 1998)

The literature review of the previous chapter and the current chapter’s conceptualization of the analytical framework of non-take-up of social support together form the first phase of theory development. This was necessary to clearly define and demarcate the phenomenon of non-take-up of social support. To paraphrase Snellen & van de Donk,

17 These phases provide a more nuanced view of theory development than other, rather dichotomous distinctions made elsewhere in the literature, such as theory-building vs. theory-testing and inductive vs. deductive research.

in this phase, it was determined which aspects of the phenomenon are of importance and which aspects can suitably be ignored as well as which aspects are foregrounded and which are seen as background (1998: p. 6).

Hence, this is the conceptual starting position that will steer the systematic collection of empirical data in later chapters (5, 6 and 7). Subsequently, hypotheses will be formulated based on those empirical observations. These hypotheses hopefully form the impetus for future theory-building efforts in the pursuit of a more or less “mature theory” (Snellen & Van de Donk, 1998). Subjecting these hypotheses to empirical testing helps to further build and strengthen academic knowledge about non-take-up. The concluding chapter of this thesis will digress on those hypotheses (see §9.4). The development of a theory of non-take-up is, however, not merely of academic interest. As the famous dictum puts it, “There is nothing as practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1943: p. 118).<sup>18</sup> The theoretical knowledge that is generated can be used by (policy) practitioners to increase the effectiveness and quality of social services offered by third sector organizations. The concluding chapter of this thesis (chapter 9) will also further expand on this particular aspect.

### 3.5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a tailor-made analytical framework was constructed, providing the basis for further inquiry into non-take-up of social support. Based on the literature review (chapter 2), it was argued that non-take-up of social support can be understood only by adopting a contextualized, multilevel analytical framework. It would be too restrictive, even plainly wrong, to artificially isolate the potential welfare recipient from his/her environment. Such isolation would not recognize the role and importance of other external (f)actors that influence help-seeking for social support. The analytical framework places the potential welfare client within the broader context of the social service system, thereby acknowledging the role and impact of other actors in the help-seeking process. This is notably different from other approaches in the literature that focus narrowly on the individual, neglecting the role and impact of potentially relevant (f)actors from the wider environment.

Furthermore, while most models on help-seeking and take-up (either implicitly or explicitly) adhere to behavioral assumptions of the rational actor model, it was argued that this model is too limited and limiting and therefore inapplicable in the social domain. It provides a too-simplistic account of help-seeking for social support and fails to capture

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<sup>18</sup> The exact source of this expression is not entirely clear. Some attribute it to Ludwig Boltzmann (1890). But as Peters (2001) notes, it can probably be traced back to Immanuel Kant.

the nuances and complexities of this process. Hence, an alternative, more realistic set of behavioral assumptions was formulated. Help-seeking behavior is *not* guided by rational calculations of objective, clear-cut measures of costs and (expected) benefits but depends on how individuals subjectively construe the world: not all individuals are sufficiently and equally self-confident, rational, active and competent.

In other words, help-seeking (cap)abilities are not equally distributed among the population but are *normally* distributed. Individuals differ in, *inter alia*, their willpower, information position, cognitive abilities, bureaucratic competences, health literacy, and physical condition. Furthermore, non-take-up of social support is regarded as a *dynamic process* embedded in a multilayered social service system. This fundamentally differs from the way help-seeking behavior is considered in the rational actor model, namely, as a static yes/no decision that is guided solely by rational, utility-maximizing considerations. This concept simply does not represent the reality of help-seeking behavior. Instead, help-seeking is conceptualized as a dynamic process in which ‘irrational factors’, such as habits and cultural beliefs, are also taken into account.

Importantly, the analytical framework also acknowledges and includes the roles and responsibilities of different actors – potential welfare recipients, representatives of third sector organizations, and policymakers – in relation to the (non-)take-up of social support. It consists of four analytical levels: the level of the potential welfare recipient, the level of third sector organizations, the level of the social service system, and the level of social policies. Finally, in addition to illuminating the various levels and actors in relation to non-take-up of social support, the framework structures and guides the research efforts in forthcoming chapters. It therewith paves the way for developing a theory of non-take-up of social support. Overall, it provides a useful starting position for further investigating the complex, multidimensional phenomenon of non-take-up of social support. The next chapter will further explain how the analytical framework structures the empirical research into non-take-up of social support in the municipality of The Hague.