EURAM 2010
10th
19th-22nd May, Rome
Back to the Future
Tor Vergata University, Rome, ITALY

Paradigm Shift in the Austrian Public Health Sector. By Cooperation and Organization Development to Effectiveness of Collaboration and "Customer Proximity"

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Track: 41. Challenges for Managing Interorganizational Networks

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Abstract

Cooperation and networks are the current trend. Western society is ever increasingly developing into a juxtaposition of highly specialized systems and organizations. This differentiation is particularly noticeable in the field of public services. Utilities and other services previously provided directly by government agencies are now made available by a wide range of outsourced and independent organizations. We therefore live in a world of organizations in which the capacity of being able to manage social problems is determined by the performance of organizations and organizational networks and cooperation. The cooperation among several organizations has developed into a central and basically vital aspect for social problem-solving – both in content as well as economically.

This paper describes the process of building up cooperation as a paradigm shift in the Upper Austrian public health sector. Basically it was an attempt to exemplify, apply and advance the latest theories of organizational development on cooperative research in a "field-test". The present process summary is therefore based on our practical experiences and outlines the most important stages of development while building up cooperation in public health sector. The paper highlights the necessary organizational development process as well as the essential tasks to be done by the external consultants and addresses both – practitioners and academics.

Keywords

Introduction

Networks and cooperation are modes of organization to increase performance, problem-solving capabilities, and competition.

Companies form alliances to implement product development and market alternatives. They do that with suppliers, wholesalers, development agencies, companies with complementary resources for added revenue, and even with competitive companies.

Clusters might be the oldest form of networking. Using synergies, they have improved whole regions and branches. Governments promote such regional or sectoral clusters as networks to increase options of specified cooperation between companies. Networking between companies in regional innovative development of economics, the specific service providers, development agencies, and governmental administration are gaining significantly in importance (Grossmann 2005).

Generally, the topic of cooperation is especially interesting for the realization of public services (Sandfort/Milward, 2008). There is hardly any social challenge that can be handled single-handedly by only one organization. To define the topic of cooperation, it pays to have a look at the development of public services during the last two decades.

This period of the last decades has been marked by political discussions about the deregulation and liberalization of governmental funded and controlled public services. During this discussion, with different governments and constitutional traditions, has brought forth different models of organization between government, private and civil society. Countries

with a socialist politics tradition have developed a mixture of welfare and support system, even when considered from an organizational point of view.

Public services are provided by a multitude of organizations, by the governmental administration itself, by out-sourced organizations with different forms of enterprise and legal status, profit-oriented companies commissioned by the state, and non-governmental enterprises with governmental funding and commission (Grossmann/Lobnig/Scala 2007, 2010). The welfare state is turned into a providing state, which doesn't provide said services by itself but rather guarantees for their availability.

Like in many different countries but also especially in Austria, there are two trends that obvious to see. The out-sourcing of public service organizations by making them relatively independent – whereas different reasons are the cause – like increase of flexibility of labour utilization, delegation of political responsibility, implementation of management and economical theories with different organizations, real decentralization to ensure an increase of efficiency, competitiveness, and provision of services closer to the customer. Still unsolved is the problem of controlling by the board of management and the service level agreement.

The increasing autonomy has led to more individual responsibility of the organisations and has incited internal processes of development as well. Responsibility in leadership and a careful dealing with resources have become a priority. Reforms in structure and clearer definition of profiles and competences have been ensued as well. Economic thinking is gaining in importance, sometimes at the expense of quality. The substantial pressure to succeed is increasing as well and there is a competitive fight about identity, creating your own

brand and success rate. The influence of the economic crisis on funding and controlling are yet to be seen.

The second trend that meets the eye is the increasing significance of institutions in the realm of civil services and therefore in the non-profit sector. Not only the classical social service institutions but also a multitude of newly-founded associations and institutions, who all provide important services to the community, are challenged here. This so-called third sector, the state and the profit-oriented economy being the other two, has been one of the fastest growing markets during the last years and is now an enormous international economical factor.

The present situation is like this that a large number of organizations, with different traditions, culture, and modus operandi, are working in all social areas, working on tasks next to and with each other. Their influence and size is different but their dependence on each other is growing.

Politics and administration are two actors among many others, each with their own specific roles and functions. The organizations' operations base on different legal basics with different systems of competence and organizational structure, like being more centralized or decentralized (regional). Additionally, you have to consider that organisations act and think on their own logic. Connected to them are different professions with diverse education and specialist traditions.

This diversity can be harmonized by laws, streamlining the administration, and exact rules about competences. All of these will help to reduce or minimize problems but they will not generate general change in structure and organizational culture. The attempt to order this

diversity by installing a hierarchy and set of rules has been tried time and again with only moderate success at best.

Cooperation offers an attractive possibility to handle this diversity productively. It enables persons and organizations to accomplish goals, which they couldn't when trying on their own. To achieve that interests and resources are pooled.

Furthermore political organizations seek cooperation to other organizations and players not only in the handling of pertinent issues and complex societal problems, but actually there is also an inherent self-interest in cooperation shared by political organizations which allows them to react to the mutual interdependence.

"For both public and voluntary sector organizations, working with and through other organizations is no longer exceptional; for most it is the norm" (Huxham/Vangen 1996: 6)

This interdependence between the different organizations with their different structures and logics of action – whether they be governmental organizations, NPOs, clubs, or traditional-profit organizations in this field – socio-economic, social and sustainable aspects must be managed.

Basis and impulse are calculations of benefits, which lead to cooperation. Only cooperation that result in mutual benefit are worth any effort in the long run. Such egoistic motifs are focal but not sufficient conditions. A more civilized form of egoism is required: The actors refrain from direct assertion of their expectations and interests to the advantage of a long-term benefit. They are taking the role of "enlightened egoists" (Willke 1995).

There is a difference between networks and closer cooperation, which can be called benefit alliances. Networks create options and possibilities to reach common goals and to profit from

each other. Benefit alliances on the other hand aim to reach selected options. Not every activity within the network results in a closer cooperation. Often options don't seem to be attractive enough or the single participants are not able to reach the goal together.

The radical new thing in cooperation in the public sector, and especially in cooperation that exceed the boundaries between public, profit, and non-profit sectors and connect these three with each other, are the horizontal relations based on trust.

In cooperation organizational behaviour cannot be based on usual hierarchical status of domination and submission or indifferent relationships between buyer and seller. Recent discussions among scientists and practicioners argue that consulting of networks and collaborations needs to apply different focuses and models than those of single organizational settings (Sydow & Mannings 2006, Chisholm 2008). So organizations have to consider the interests and terms of their partners as well and they have to refrain from viewing them as obstacles to overcome.

Cooperation thrives on a stable relationship between partners. These relationships are an essential condition to guarantee success. However, networks and benefit alliances have to form structures and cooperation has to be organized. As long as the cooperation merely bases on its participants' individual cultures and structures, the set-up for the desired cooperation is jeopardy.

Therefore it is vital to create and sustain new forms of organization without holding tight to conventional forms. To cooperate also means to admit an open process. All participants have to endure both, discrepancies between the various interests and experiences of the participants

and the limiting and sometimes competing forces within their own organization. The organizations and their management require the strategic maturity and have to hold on to long-term goals and benefits. The actors need the necessary backup from the management and at the same time enough latitude to operate successfully.

Therefore, adequate clearance and competence are asked for and have to be provided by the relevant home organizations. There has to develop a transition from loyalty from the home organization to the cooperation.

The fitting form of organization can only be found in a common process with all partners of the cooperation involved.

This process of setting up such cooperation in the Upper Austrian health care and social sector is explained in the present paper from a consultant's point of view, as well as from a scientific perspective.

Context of the Case Study

During reforms in health care system in 2005, Austria tried for the first time to create a legal basis for funding an integral and efficiency-enhancing cooperation structure between the extra mural and intra mural health care systems. The counties have been encouraged to implement interfaces between said intra and extra mural organizations and to improve quality in services.

In the middle of 2007 the relevant actors of health and social politics in Upper Austria – especially the county administration and the health insurance – decided to work out a focal social topic with complex challenges with assistance of an organisational development approach in cooperation for the first time.

Since early 2008, our research department has been charged with the implementation of this complex cooperation project for Upper Austria in the field of health care. The main objective of this – still ongoing – cooperation project "NSM – Optimizing the Interface Management in Upper Austria" is the construction and development of a cooperation effort to optimize the cooperation of the government-based service-providing as well as non-profit organizations between the health care industry and the social services industry.

The subject gained particular significance since through the inclusion of all sectors; a dispute can take place with the interfaces between the different levels, areas and institutions of health care and social care.

Basically, this management project is about the sustained assurance of a rapid, seamless as well as medically and economically feasible treatment chain for all patients in the medical sector, as well as for all clients in the social services sector, with the objective of maintaining existing strengths and eliminating weaknesses.

Especially the following fields of work have been identified during the evaluation process:
A considerable weakness had been found in the admission management. However, the weakest link proved to be the management of dismissal. There are three possibilities of improvement throughout the county:

- Standardization in the organization of medical aids
- Standardization of the information of dismissal (like doctor's notes and letters on long term care)
- Standardization of the process of dismissal per se.

Besides identifying the admission and dismissal management for optimisation, the set-up of an NSM coordination structure for coordinating the relevant fields of work and clarifying competence issues between the participating service providing organizations with the goal of cooperation has been found necessary.

Over 30 organizations from the fields of state administration, social insurance, social service organizations, welfare associations, hospital owners and the medical board are represented in this project.

For this reason, there are both players and organizations from the government political system and government-related fields such as the Austrian institution of legally organized social insurance, public service institutions in the health care sector such as government-run hospital associations, as well as non-profit organizations of the civil society that perform public services involved.

From the outset, it was the central goal to not launch another traditional planning project, but to develop a specific stable cooperation system based on the cooperation approach, and to test this especially during the duration of the project in selected model regions.

On the consulting side, the necessary services are assembled for this from professional organizational consulting and scientific analyses.

Considerations to Guide the Project Design

Implementation of a preliminary design study for the commission of an external monitoring system for all relevant institutions

Especially during the first foundation phase and at sensitive points of development, the help of "omni-partisan third parties" can be invaluable. It is important that external consultants are viewed neutral by all participating institutions – who normally hail from different fields of work, act based on different interests, and follow different specific logics.

Only neutrality enables the consultants to figure out different and common interests, to structure a working schedule, to define the relevant topics, to find solutions within the said tasks, to develop rules of cooperation, to settle conflicts, and to work out the decision making process. To ensure acceptance and grant the necessary capacity to act, experts and organizational consultants are required, who are dedicated to the task at hand – the development of cooperation. The more the participating organizations are dedicated to the formation of the cooperation, independent from single persons or institutions, the more efficient will be the set up of a cooperation system.

Therefore it is a necessity to create the required impartiality of the external monitoring system within the system of cooperating institutions before the development process is about to start.

A preliminary design study is a good way to do so. The frame of the project, its content and organization including the commission of external consultants, can be drafted by all cooperating institutions together. The representatives of the cooperating institutions meet with

a task at hand, even before the hotter phases, which demand decisions concerning direct solutions, and they begin to form relationships of cooperation that will help to improve the complete concept. During this process the representatives also are introduced to the external actors and have the opportunity to check on their neutrality and impartiality.

The pre-project has to be set up in a way that all potential actors have the opportunity to bring themselves in and to develop and decide on the contents and organization of the project together. The participating of the relevant institutions should be planned resource conscious, however. It is vital that the high effort of time to prepare the project can be discouraging to the participating institutions as they calculate the final resources necessary to implement the actual project. The general guidelines should therefore be:

- a slim start to commission the preliminary design study

- a core team that prepares the frame of the project, consisting of representatives of the key player institutions, as well as additional tasks for the basic frame by an extended pre-project team by representatives of the additional institutions

- a decision making process about the evaluated frame of the project by a gremium, formed by all cooperating institutions – consisting of managers of said institutions.

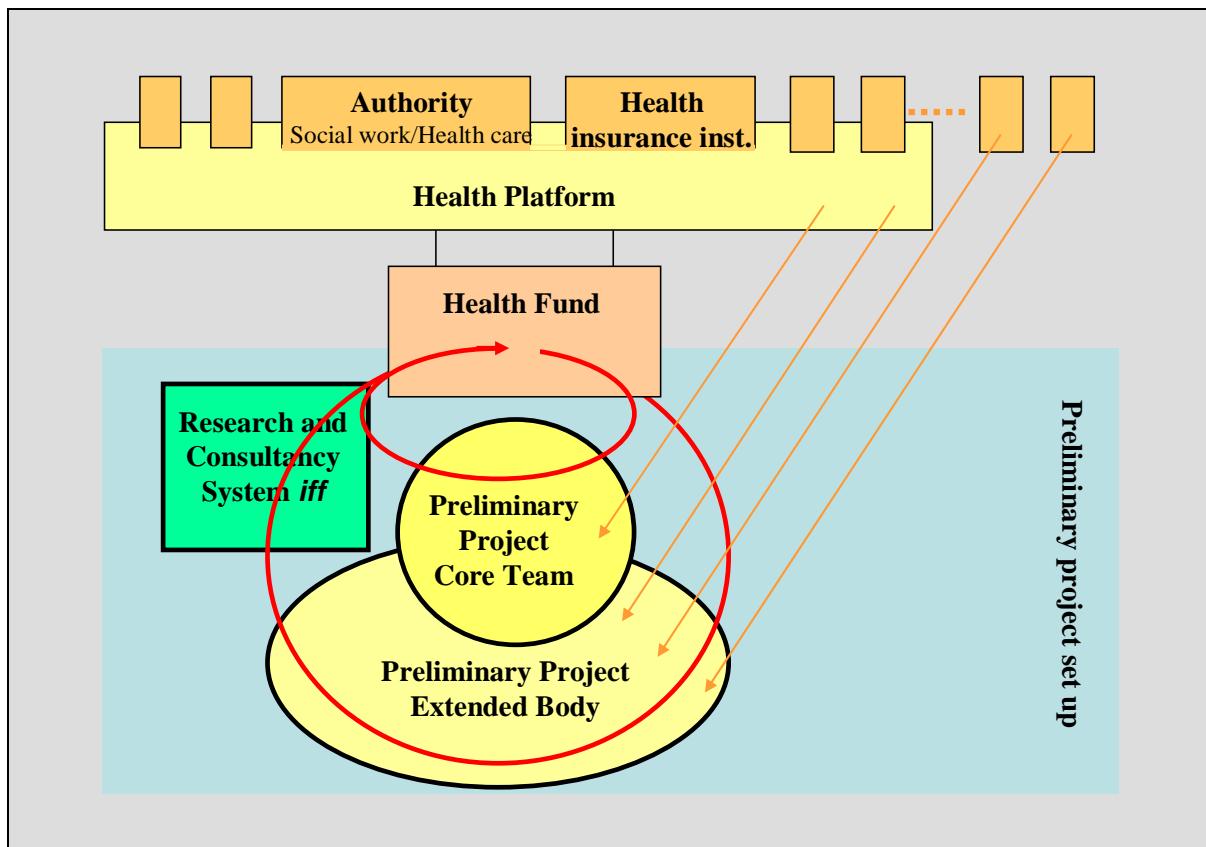Fig. 1 shows the ideal formation of a pre-project team.

Fig. 1: Preliminary project set up

Simultaneous Focussing on the Complete Province Level and Local-County Level

The project was to eventually create generally valid guidelines for the entire province. In the future all players were to be committed to these guidelines so that each player or person/ institution concerned would "operate" in a way that was best harmonized with the other players.

At the same time, it had to be possible to render specific services for and to the individual citizen/patient locally, in the district based on the general guidelines applicable in the entire province. The wording "possible to render services" should be taken to mean that on site

services can only be rendered successfully if they take into account the specific social and organizational circumstances of the district which are the result of "organic growth".

Set-up of a Cooperation Commitment

With cooperation it is vital to consider the necessary commitment of the participating organizations on the different axis'. To ensure cooperation in the counties between actors of single institutions, which operate sometimes only local (like a doctor, a local home care service), mostly in the whole county (like social counselling services of the county administration, or mobile services), often even in the whole province (like insurance institutions, or mobile sick and home care services and ambulances), commitment to the agreed guidelines, instruments, and future cooperation structure is absolutely necessary:

- on an operative level between actors of the institutions in a county,
- on the management level between the managers of institutions in a county, as well as managers of institutions within a province.
- It also takes commitment within each institution, between the actors and their managers in a county and their managers of their province.
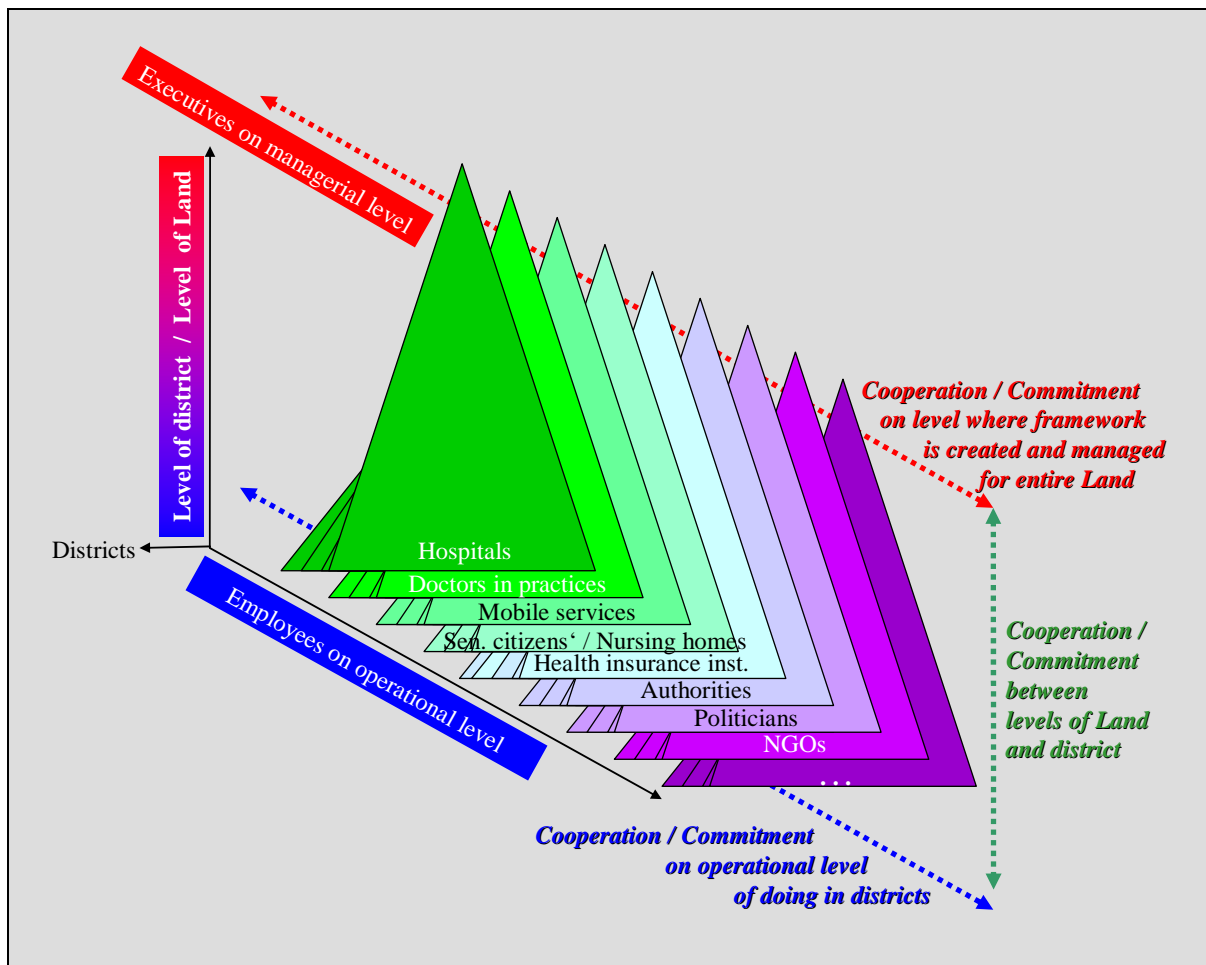
Fig. 2: Different levels of cooperative commitment

Since commitment can't be commanded, but on the other hand should be installed at the end of the project in a way that they can be handled in everyday situations, it is necessary that there is social interaction and team work on and between all these levels during the whole process. This has to be ensured by the project organization during set up and running periods.

Set-up of Organizational Project Vessels to Increase the Project Effectivity

To guarantee the most efficient and creative solution finding process possible, and to ensure the functionality for the actual work of cooperating institutions, it is useful that the

diagnosis/validation is done by two individual teams. Different groups of persons should be appointed to these teams: The diagnosis is done by representatives of the operative actors, since these people have the necessary know-how and are the ones who have to deal with the consequences after the implementation.

The decision making is done by representatives of the management, who have the political power and who have to make decisions concerning guidelines within their organizations after implementation. The formation of a hierarchy in this cooperation for the project shall be done intentionally.

Since the members of the diagnosis team don't have to make decisions for the binding guidelines of their organization, they are encouraged to find alternative, creative, and basically new solutions. The testing of new solutions during the pilot process makes the introduction and testing of totally new solutions easier. The members of this team are explicitly commissioned to do so and the possibility of reacting positively to changes and innovations later on increases.

It is important that consents of decision makers, who they represent, are binding. The team members have to be able to rely on them and also can refer to them during their operative work, during the piloting or the later implementation of solutions in their field of work. In this way

- the idea of 'conception' and 'decision-making' are strictly separated
- the found solutions will be represented by a large number of actively participating persons within their own organization and
- the whole process will become relatively resource conscious, concerning the binding of resources at that time.
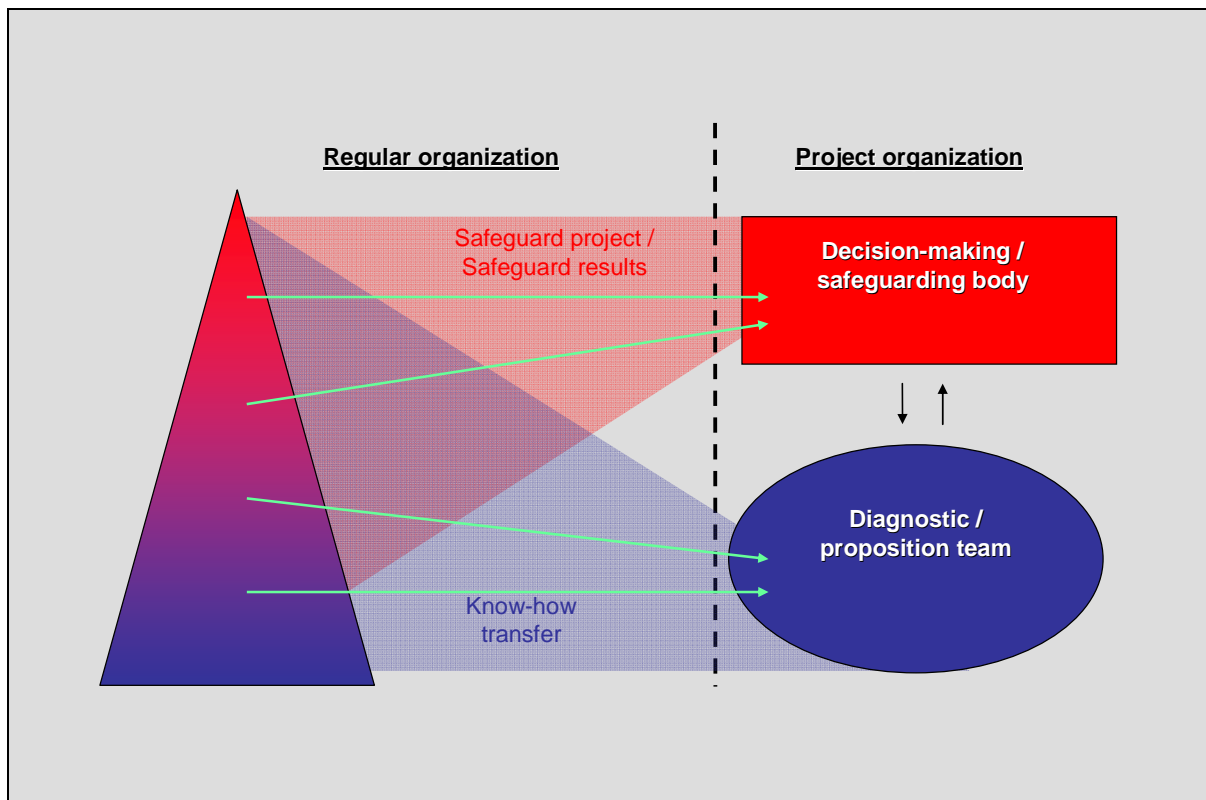
Fig. 3: diagnostic/proposition and decision-making/safeguarding work project vessels

Establishing a project design, which allows a parallel transfer of solutions from the beginning accompanying the diagnosis and conception

In a regular non-cooperative project the conceptual phase follows clear schematics:

Under the guidance of external consultants the solutions and structures and their necessary instruments will be developed taking the concerned persons into account in various degrees. Sometimes solutions are selected from an existing pool and are adapted if necessary. This is a very popular method by large projects, especially in the public sector. The advantages are clear: Solutions are found quickly, external know-how can be used in an excessive way, and there is a relatively low possibility of ensuing conflicts with the concerned parties during the conceptual phase.

There are also disadvantages of course. There is a limited use of the know-how of the concerned persons within the system going hand in hand with the increased possibility of contempt towards the new solutions and a higher risk of dilution of these solutions during the implementation since compromises have to be made. Another disadvantage in the de facto separation of solution finding and solution transfer is the missed chance of testing by the actors who will have to deal with the found solutions in the future. This loss of field testing within a protected area of an externally guided project during the set up of cooperation system is a negative effect doubled.

Actors in a cooperative system are always facing the dilemma of "double loyalty" - the loyalty to the own institution and the loyalty to the cooperation system. Cooperation can only work on a long-term basis if there is a possibility for the actors to remain loyal to both, their own institution and the cooperation system, and to find a balance between those two. The actors of the cooperation will not manage to do so completely on their own. They will need assistance from their colleagues within their own institution who are not directly participating in the cooperation but who (can) influence it indirectly.

This asks for a field testing that allows all directly and indirectly involved participants of cooperation to be set up to act "free of punishment" concerning the "double loyalty". This includes the level of management as well as the operative level, regarding opinion making, decision making, and voting during the analysis and conceptual work and the first trial runs.

This approach differs explicitly from other projects in the public service because it does not involve experts who develop complete solutions in bodies removed from those concerned. Hence, it is not about developing everything, committing it to paper, having it approved by

the top level of the hierarchy and then transporting it to those concerned and implementing it in the institutions. As solutions are found directly by representative of those concerned with the support of external consultants who accompany them in respect of content and procedure, and as solutions found are directly tested for their practical value in the course of pilot projects, solution transfer is from the start an ongoing parallel process. This means that test runs and parallel transfers are the fitness program for the later life cooperation.

To use resources as economically as possible, the actual work on finding solutions only takes place in a few districts brought together in clusters and operational players and executives of the other districts are hooked up with the process via occasional transfer events.

Concerning the description of the relevant project design we will explain certain aspects later.

Set up of a Cooperative Room for Manoeuvre

The explained conceptual theories are only vaguely known by the majority of the project's actors. To make a difference to the up to date experiences with projects of the actors, the specifications of the cooperative approach have to be pointed out and shown as an alternative and motivating way.

This is only possible if the approaches are established explicitly and with consent of the project's actors, useful or dysfunctional actions are being commented and special social settings are installed.

Only by a direct cooperative dialogue between all participating actors – supported by the external consultants – the knowledge can be passed on to them. A public discursive exchange and the most possible transparency is necessary.

This social process has to take place as early as possible. The earlier the faster all considerations will take effect productively. The more often these loops of testing, feedback and learning are practised before the start of content-oriented project work, the more likely and intensive the grade of efficiency concerning considerations for the solution finding process and the decision making process as well.

Actually a cooperative room for manoeuvre has to be created, which marks an emotional and conceptual difference to the internal hierarchic regular business, as well as to experiences with normally planned projects.

The need arises to create a space which allows the cooperation some means of exchange with the political system and at the same time set up borders to that political subsystem. This is a necessary condition for any cooperation concerning public goods and working in an area so close to politics to keep the general idea of team work and partnership working. What is meant is that cooperation is only responsible to itself and its operators and organizations, and that cooperation has to develop from its own source.

This fine line between connection to and secession from the controlling system of politics is critical for the further advancement of cooperation in the public area. On one hand it is necessary to connect to this political system to ensure the required legitimation to ensure the possibility to make strategic decisions and to guarantee the availability of resources. On the

other hand any attempt of taking influence on the political system's side has to be limited to a productive amount. Too much control by politics would endanger the equilibrium of cooperation and could lead to break-up of the same. Cooperation lives on the basis that all involved organizations give up a part of their sovereignty in exchange to common profit. If said profit is jeopardized by too much influence on the politics side, the individual partners will withdraw and the cooperation is terminated.

Since field testing happens within a protected, and externally guided, room – within the boundaries of newly created cooperation structures and new guidelines – the probability increases that actors will work within and with the solutions found during the project. It takes an open handling with transgressions, contradiction, etc. This is less common in everyday business but it is invaluable for the success for developing and sustaining cooperation.

Such 're-socialization' concerning action within a protected area of manoeuvre and within agreed goals, modes of operation, and guidelines, as well as an active culture of feed back and conflicts, is a vital and permanent project task for cooperation systems.

Cooperation must therefore utilize the "area in between" located within the tense interdependence between politics, the independent outsourced organizations and profit as well as non-profit organizations. The question if through this balancing process between connection and boundaries – better subsumed with the concept of control problems – a new system arises, has already often been covered elsewhere (Willke 1995, Sydow 1994, Maintz 1993, Scharpf 1993). Nevertheless this functionalizes cooperation at least into an independent project system that offers the opportunities for the system to be tested beyond the legal framework and, up to a certain extent, even beyond efficiency-oriented financial aspects and subsequently to constitute them into a sustainable state.

Project Design and Mode of Operation

To implement the cooperation project, a structure is selected that has been organized quite centrally in terms of a "bottom up" principle, but also to ensure the commitment of the leadership and management at regional and state levels.

Contrary to conventional planning projects, it is essential that in cooperation projects the collaborating players on the operational, practical "doing" level develop the substantive and structural design of the cooperation according to the "bottom up" principle. This will ensure that the cooperation actually develops on its own and not as usually experienced where external solutions are imposed on existing problems. This is a key success factor for sustainable cooperation.

This will enable the operative players to solve their problem areas with their own self-created measures. The observation has shown that this approach is by no means self-evident and therefore was received with distrust and astonishment by the operational players at the beginning, however, as the project advanced, enthusiasm for the approach was ever increasing.

The comprehensive integration of the control level guarantees the necessary commitment needed for substantive results and also ensures the anchoring of the cooperation project in the organizations involved and in their necessary internal restructuring measures. The broad involvement of the control level of the cooperation players causes both the substantive cooperation structure developed by the operative basis and of course also the cooperation effort itself to gain experience in necessary defense of their status and political validation.

The Set Up

On the highest political control level, a steering committee is constituted in which the top executives of the participating organizations as well as the main political decision-makers of the country are represented. This committee makes all of the decisions arising in the project and also secures these in the relevant project environments, whereas the presence of each respective leader from every institution involved in the steering committee ensures that these decisions made on the basis of a broad consensus are also carried forth into the individual departments and by the local players.

Following the "bottom up" principle, in order to support the operational level that bears the main burden of preparing the substantive and structural design of the cooperation – in terms of hierarchy, directly under the steering committee – a national project team was trained that laid the cornerstones for the project at the operational level, where also relevant scientific findings were considered. This team sets the substantive framework and formulates the outline and guidelines as an action guide for the concrete preparation on the operational processing level. Another challenge is for the national project team to adapt solutions and suggestions on the operational level and it consolidates them with an overall country focus. In addition, the team carries out the selection and establishment of the processing teams at the operational level.

In summary, it can be said that at the highest control level (at the federal state level), a dual project system has been installed: a committee at the executive level that secures the current results in the context of the pilot project, and ultimately makes policy decisions, and a project team to organize and process the substantive, operational agendas.
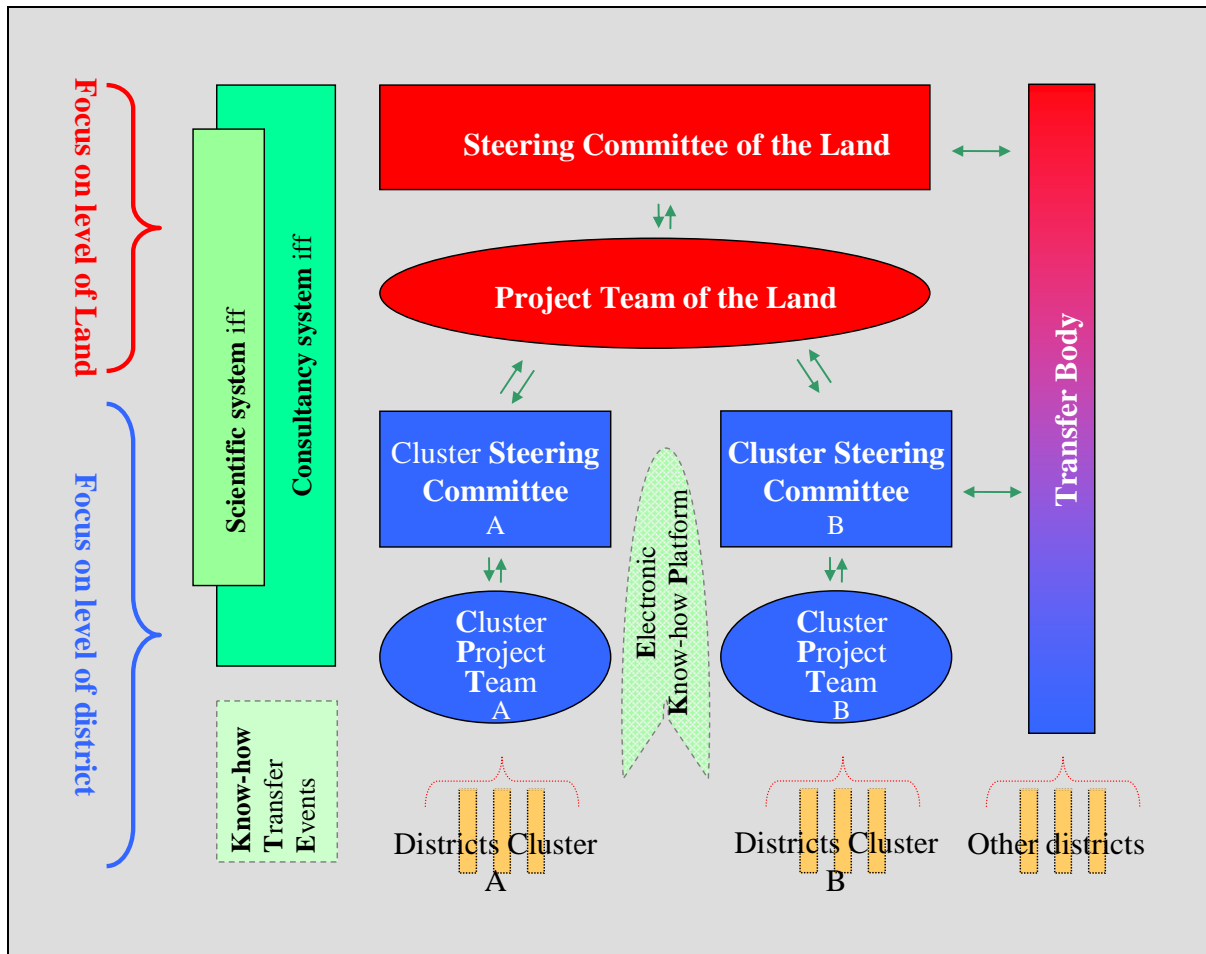
Fig. 4: Project set up

This dual project system is then repeated at an operational level.

In both model regions, each composed of several political districts, a committee was in turn established at the executive level and finally both teams are located here at the operational level, which assume the brunt of the substantive work following the lines of the "bottom up" principle. The operational teams conceptualize the practical tools, instruments and content suggestions with regard to the relevant performance-related processes in the model regions within the framework of the country project teams. The committee at the executive level provides content-based support for their substantive findings and structural proposals for the design of the cooperation, and these findings and proposals must ultimately also be supported

from all sides. In this respect, the committee at the executive level makes the necessary decisions in relation to the work of operational teams and secures these results – as would the steering committee at the country level – among the relevant players and organizations in the pilot regions.

The testing in two model regions was necessary to attain a well secured, substantive and legitimized density of results based on the necessary critical range and awareness of the cooperation.

Methods of the Mode of Operation

In the two model regions, which consist of several political administration counties, the cluster development team faced the challenge to work on the tasks commissioned by the NSM province project team within a time frame of a few work days.

In fact both cluster development teams worked out a paper of 55 and 45 pages of A4 format as well as an equivalent of presentation sheets within 4-days of workshops. During the work on the content (management of allocation, management of dismissal, and optimizing of practice of medication and medical aids) the teams have tried from the start to create a cooperative understanding between the participating actors and to consider the interfaces of the process when working on solutions. This enabled to work on problems at the interfaces of everyday work and optimize processes afterwards.

To make best use of the limited time window, the team had to utilize the protected room. They were successful to with pointing out the differences of perspectives between the current logic of works of the present situation and the planned logic of the time after the solution finding process.

The whole process to work on the content of the task has been divided up into three sub steps:

1. Step

During the first step the development team mapped the ideal state of the relevant paths of clients, which could be separated clearly from the logics of day-to-day routines. Maps for ideal processing had been charted in which the relevant steps of treatment of patients (management of admission, management of dismissal, etc.) have been displayed as parts of the complete process.

Focal point among others was that the whole process has been shown from the service provider's as well as from the patient's point of view. By doing this the team managed to point out new perspectives and to work out a new reference system aside their organisational socialization.

2. Step

After finishing step 1 the ideal pictures, or in other words the new reference systems, have been compared to the already existing modes of operation. By comparison the focal problems and weaknesses but also the existing strengths and advantages could be identified. Based on this analysis it was possible to think about new functional solutions.

3. Step

During the last step the solutions have been defined first and single regulations and agreements have been developed. The initial ideal process map has been updated by these new solutions, regulations, etc. and finalized into a new cooperative process map for the day-to-day work of all actors.
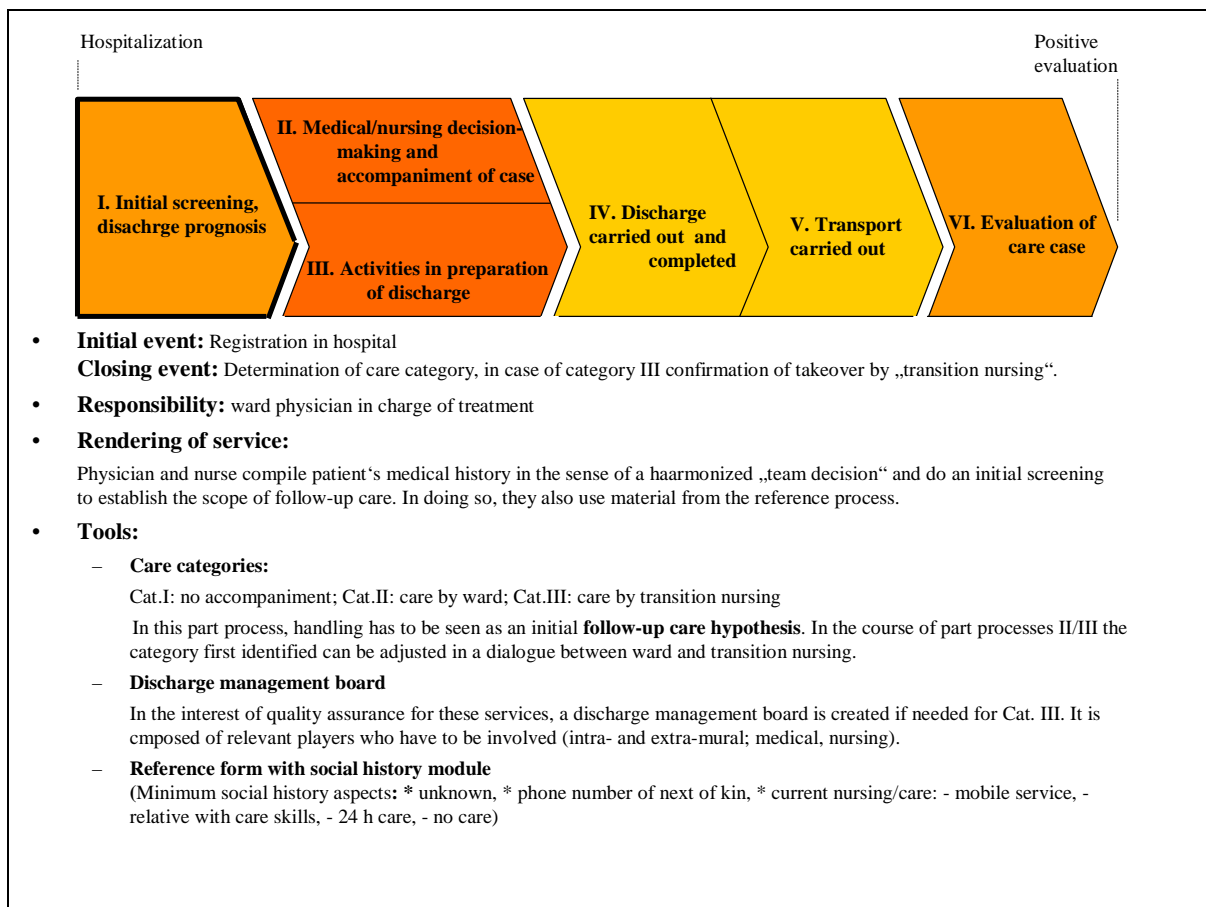

- **Initial event:** Registration in hospital
  Closing event: Determination of care category, in case of category III confirmation of takeover by „transition nursing".

- **Responsibility:** ward physician in charge of treatment

- **Rendering of service:**
  Physician and nurse compile patient's medical history in the sense of a haarmonized „team decision" and do an initial screening to establish the scope of follow-up care. In doing so, they also use material from the reference process.

- **Tools:**
  - **Care categories:**
    Cat.I: no accompaniment; Cat.II: care by ward; Cat.III: care by transition nursing

    In this part process, handling has to be seen as an initial **follow-up care hypothesis**. In the course of part processes II/III the category first identified can be adjusted in a dialogue between ward and transition nursing.

  - **Discharge management board**
    In the interest of quality assurance for these services, a discharge management board is created if needed for Cat. III. It is cmposed of relevant players who have to be involved (intra- and extra-mural; medical, nursing).

  - **Reference form with social history module**
    (Minimum social history aspects**:** * unknown, * phone number of next of kin, * current nursing/care: - mobile service, - relative with care skills, - 24 h care, - no care)

Fig. 5 Results for „Discharge Management" in districts of Cluster A: Process Step 1

During the development of the structure-oriented task of the coordination structure, the team tried a different approach.

For this topic, the consulting team has done some preparation and interviewed all relevant system players in the model region. These interviews have been analysed to work out a thesis and the summary has been provided to the development team as an initial basis of work.

Based on this paper, the development team tried to institutionalise the cooperative approach and therefore secure the agreed solutions, process agreements, regulations at the relevant interfaces, to evaluate them permanently, and to fortify personal contact and keep up conceptual discourse. For this the team developed the structure shown in Fig. 6.

Based on the ideas and goals of the cooperation structure and analog to the project structure of the development team, it has been suggested to install a coordination committee, which should improve the cooperative approach, guarantees its sustaining, processes ensuing ideas and presents them to the management. The management of the regions' task was to take up the improvements, to judge them and to ensure them to being kept up. On provincial level the team encouraged the provincial coordination team to collect all results, discuss them and to analyse whether they could be implemented in the whole province. Finally, the NSM solutions should be decided upon by the executive committee politically, in respect of content and organization, and in the following maintain them.
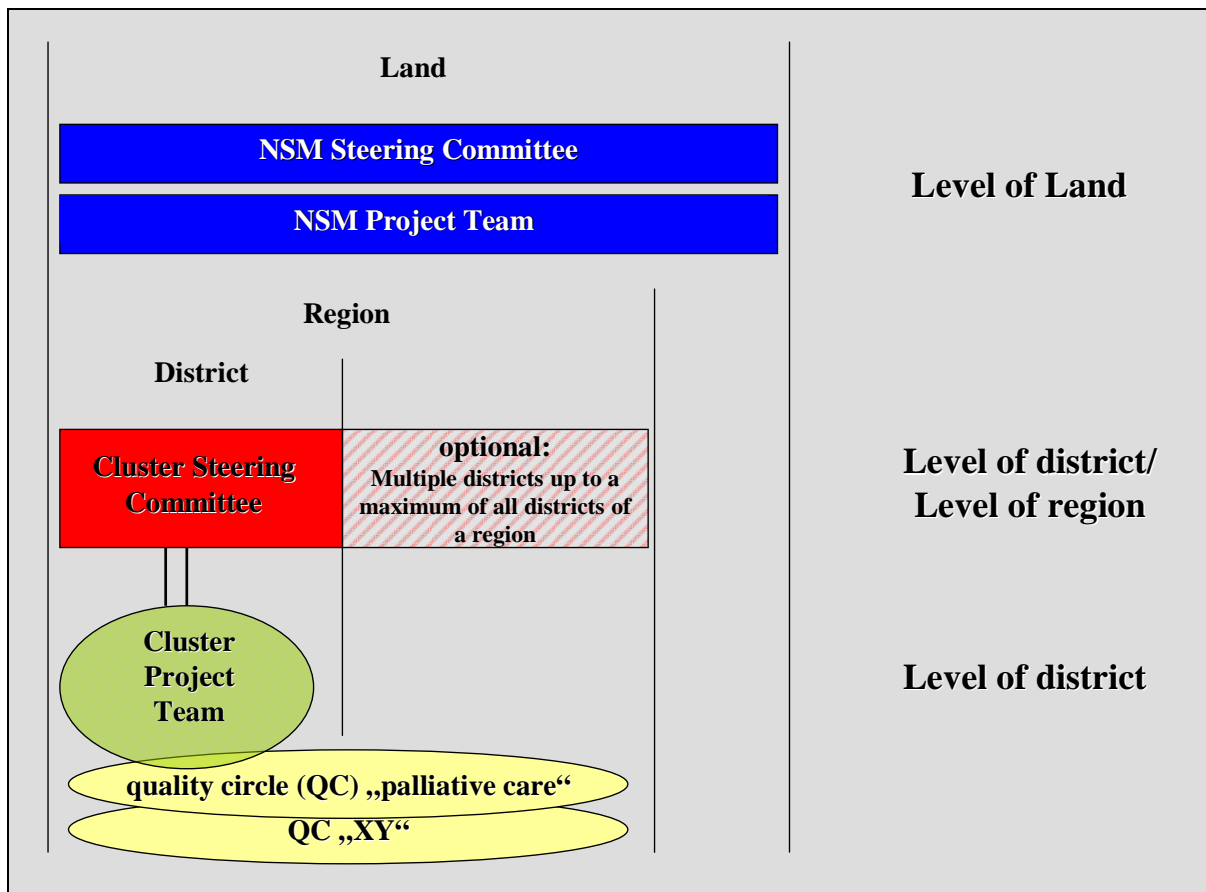
Fig. 6: Developed cooperation structure

The execution of the preparation of this task by external project support has turned out to be a professional mistake and has shown a vital criteria for the success of cooperation. The content of the task, concerning problem analysis as well as solution finding, has been developed by the members within the cooperation system. By doing this the necessary commitment has been generated, which led to the fact that the participants presented and defended their solutions in ensuing discussion with the other project committees.

During the development of the cooperation structure, the problem analysis has been taken over by the external consultants and they have presented a pre-generated set of solutions for the working process. Although this step has been necessary due to lack of time as well as the cooperation structure having been a very strange environment for most of the team members,

it has shown that the pre-generated solutions didn't generate a quality of commitment, like it has been automatically the case during the development of content.

At the presentation of the solutions to the relevant project committees, there was a major difference – in comparison to the presented guideline solutions – concerning the identification with the presented solutions as well as the dedication with which the solutions had been presented.

Only during the later phase of processing and discussing, the commitment could be raised to an equal level of quality. In fact a much larger effort was necessary, than would have been if the teams had had performed their own problem analysis and developed their own solutions.

Transfer Committee

Besides the content and structure-based working process, there was another step being taken into consideration. To present all solutions not only to the directly involved actors but also to a wider circle, a transfer committee has been appointed.

The team members of the cluster counties test and present their developed solutions to their colleagues and ensure that the ideas spread in the cluster counties. At the same time the actors of the project get a feedback by the concerned people who are not directly involved in the project. The feedback was based on a content-based as well as emotional level. Such qualified feedback can be used to modify and improve any ideas and analyse specifications that haven't

been taken into account so far. Further development is guaranteed as it will be required later during regular business. First test runs are the by-product for later development.

The feedback, which is based mostly on emotions, help the actors to get some impressions on agreement and consent and may think on further reasoning for further transfer to the area of their own county as well as helping gathering further material for province-wide implementation. Via the transfer group dialog the developed solutions spread into the less intensively participating non-cluster counties.

Piloting and Evaluation

Right from the start of the project the primary claim was that the two cluster development teams will present solutions which have been tested and piloted in the model regions at the end of the conceptual phase. Especially their suitability in everyday business and their potential to implement has to be tested.

The piloting, which was done within a time frame of four months, resulted in two aspects of reflection. First, the members of the development team, as well as all participating actors, had the chance to test and document the results by precise practise work. Second, the piloting and evaluation created a data base, which enabled the development team to give a well-founded feedback.

During the testing, and especially during the evaluation, classical benchmarking hasn't been the goal. It was never thought to be a standard validated scientific research. Instead a

qualitative development and learning-based evaluation of the worked out contents had been attempted and aimed for gaining material for still necessary adaptation and refining for the found and tested solutions.

Another goal of the piloting was to create a mode of learning for the actors to gain experience for substantial improvements and to take a step towards cooperative and long-term activities of development at the same time.

During the testing phase the results concerning content as well as the structural ideas have been piloted in a modular constellation and the additional effort of the piloting has been divided up among the actors and organizations, based on the idea of cooperative projects.

The evaluation after the piloting by the cluster development team based on two approaches:
On one hand the qualitative expert interviews on the piloting have been executed by the external project support and the conclusion presented to the operative development team. The interviews based on a general guideline, which made sure that all interviews with actors have been the same. One qualitative expert interview has been made with at least one actor of every piloting organization, 37 interviews all in all.

On the other hand clearly structured evaluation forms, which were easy to fill in and didn't take too much time, have been handed out to all pilot participating organizations (hospitals, elderly and nursing homes, social services, mobile services, practical doctors, etc.). At the end of the piloting time they have been analysed and processed for graphical display.

Both methods have been used as basis material for interpretation and evaluation by both operating teams. The evaluation was the foundation for adaptation and improvement of planned solutions.

The evaluation has shown that the content and structure of project solutions – especially since they have been designed with the "bottom up" principle by actors of the relevant operative levels – have been already well-founded. This could be seen clearly by the fact that according to the piloting not a single solution had been rejected. This speaks for the intensive problem diagnosis of the operating teams, who are very well aware of existing problems – and it proves that it is a sound idea to let solutions be developed by the operative level. The learning-based evaluation contributed to the task to further define and tune the solutions.

Conclusion

Independent from the successful execution of the evaluation for the content-based aspects of the project itself, there are some relevant conclusions on the set up of cooperation. Essential criteria of success of cooperation in the public sector could be confirmed (Grossmann/Lobnig/Scala, in print 2010) and some new could be identified.

The developments within the project NSM have proven that especially 5 factors are relevant for cooperation in public health and social sector:

- A development of good personal relationship between the actors
- Well structured work on the performance process of organizations

- Interlocking teams working within clearly defined areas of work with precise assignments

- Said teams have to work within an obligatory structure supported by good interaction of working and decision making levels of centralized and decentralized elements

- and also supported by consultants responsible for the process

Supportive personal relationships are a necessity for long lasting cooperation, because without them thrust cannot be established. Trust also requires relationships that are transparent, predictable and perform well under pressure. Trust is generated by actions that justify trust and continuously confirm it. Trust presumes that the actors reveal their conditions of action and establish understanding for the point of view of the others. Trustful cooperation also requires refraining from direct implementation of interests in expectation of long term benefit.

The visible and comprehensible commitment for the common task of interest is the key to build up trust. This commitment is shown during the common mandatory process of work. Good relationships are needed to ensure trust and on the other hand the same trust will strengthen the relationships. The success of cooperation in turn fortifies the relationships and the cooperation.

Personal relationships are not sufficient to keep up the cooperation. Structural anchoring is also necessary. On a structural level

- a common team set up by the partners of the cooperation,

- the dispatch and commission of professional colleagues with clearly defined areas of action, and

- commonly set rules for the cooperation

are decisive factors.

Teams are the principle of building cooperation, which thrive from the work of teams appointed by several partners. By the positive experiences during the various working processes within the team, an essential source of motivation and energy is created for the whole cooperation. Teams have to be utilized on different levels:

- First on the level of the direct working process that deal with the cooperation in general.

- Second on the level of coordination and on the level of decision making.

- Third on the level of various special tasks, like the preparation of presentation and events, marketing, preparation of working and decision making processes, and last but not least organization consulting.

These teams, formed from different organizations and professions, need support in the development of their working structure and culture.

Rules that are accepted by all actors are important for the common work. The rules help to ensure continuity and reliability of personal commitment and create a productive environment of work and development of trust. The relevant rules of the NSM project are:

- Obligatory attendance

- Personal execution of assignments (no representations)

- Principle of the unanimous vote

- Commonly created information and foreign policy

The separation of working and decision making levels (coordination teams of districts, committee of controlling, coordination teams of the county, executive committee) have a double function. This way it is ensured that the work of the operative staff is bound to the leadership level and common decisions about the implementations are made. At the same time the share of work relieves the professional staff of the burden to answer for all results and consequences within their organization. This is the only way to enable professionals to offer unconventional suggestions. The decisions about implementation and obligation are up to the management. In cooperation the appointed colleagues of an organization have to guarantee a double loyalty – to the organization they work for and to the cooperation itself. To make that possible they need a direct task from their organization and a room for manoeuvre for individual development at the same time. They need both, independence from and backing by the management of their own organization. At the same time the management faces a dilemma with cooperation. The leading level differs well between the developing project and the final implementation. While the appointed colleagues have been able to work independently and creatively during the development phase, it was shown that the project has been considered in a political way by the management as soon as the possibility of actual implementation arose. At this pivotal point of the project the dilemma of consulting cooperation becomes visible: It takes an internal development of the organization for the cooperation. However, the consultants of cooperation can work on the internal developments of an organization only in a very limited way. It is vital that a cooperative thinking and comprehension is introduced to the participating organizations to stimulate the necessity of an internal improvement parallel to the cooperation.

Cooperation profits from a qualified neutral consulting. The cooperation needs the independent third party, which is only dedicated to the new cooperative system and is the solicitor of the new system. At the beginning of cooperation it is difficult for each participant to set goals and modes of operation without facing distrust and rejection. Counsellors can offer options for forms of organizations and process steps without being bound to individual interests and having a good view on the common system. They can execute evaluations and initial discourse when choosing the possible participants in a so-called "due-diligence" phase. Since they don't support individual goals, they can be solicitors of the newly founded system and build bridges between the different organizations. Professional expertise in development of organizations is an advantage as well to offer custom-tailored structures and modes of operation. This work is considered a service that has to be provided continuously and is underestimated on a regular basis, concerning the required professional prerequisites as well as effort.

Especially during the initial phase the consultants structure and moderate the process of work and take care that the rules and the agreed upon steps of the process are kept. Support in a process with unknown results is provided. Besides the professional service, consulting also enables a coequal participation and equal importance of all organizations and/or actors.

This is a decisive factor for the success of a cooperation system.

Every partner, who captures a special role or surges ahead, creates mistrust by the others. On the other hand development has to be advanced actively. The consultants take over this function until the cooperation system is stabile and an accepted internal share of work has been generated. After that a rotating moderation – with the exception of challenging single situations – can be performed by the members of the relevant committees. Cooperation has to be organized. Goals and structures develop in a common development process. An enormous

amount of communication and coordination is required. Cooperation needs the support of a "server in the net". This coordinating authority has to be accepted by all participating organizations and has to be appointed by all. This qualitative and quantitative task is often underestimated concerning cooperation.

Another critical aspect has to be taken into account: During the development and set up phase the participating actors of the cooperation depend on organizational, professional know-how. The external consulting is a requirement for expertise on functional structures, advice concerning the organization and development of a process of implementation as well as a precondition of a successful cooperation. As experiences during the development process of implementation of cooperation structure have shown, these required know-how should be offered in form of alternative and halfway or unfinished solutions. This way the solutions of the process can be subsequently designed as own solutions by common work of the participating actors. The necessary commitment between the actors of the cooperation is generated and established this way.

Beside these aspects cooperation also requires efficient documentation. To attain solutions in an effective way, it has turned out useful for the external consultants to support the work in teams and bodies by compiling documentation. Active documentation work in this context is more than just transcribing flip charts and comments; it also includes coordinating, structuring and graphical processing of material. Moreover, it covers the identification of outstanding issues or contradictory statements.

Cooperation is to be created as an individual social system of and between the participating organizations. Cooperation requires its own identity, the matching form of organization, its own decision making and working process, and a common foreign policy.

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