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Service delivery reform in Taiwan: A case study of the Safeguard Happiness Station

Helen K. Liu¹

Abstract

The transition from public–private partnerships (PPPs) to network governance is complex and involves a number of dynamic activities because, in reality, governments often need to address both PPPs and networks together. The purpose of this study is to examine this transition process from PPPs to network governance. In this study, we adopt Klijn and Teisman's (2003) framework to examine the Safeguard Happiness Station project in Taiwan in order to explore incentives and conditions as well as the layering process and mechanisms for transitioning from PPPs to network governance. Our case illustrates incentives and conditions for the layering process including (1) problems associated with the structural devolution embodied in large-scale vertical and horizontal specialisation, (2) fear factor,

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(3) ease of substantial reforms and technical environments, and (4) causes of the paradigmatic shift. Furthermore, the layering process and mechanisms include interdependency, building internal and external networks, an audit network and a resource network. Finally, this case demonstrates how the layering process transits PPPs into networks and how the local government could utilise such a process to achieve its policy objectives.

Keywords: public–private partnership; governance; network; service delivery reform; Taiwan.

Introduction: Transition from new public management to collaborative governance

New public management (NPM) and collaborative governance (CG) are two distinctive public administration reforms. NPM has transformed the public sector to be outcome-driven (Christensen 2012) and has in particular established public–private partnerships (PPPs) to improve service efficiency and effectiveness (Thatcher 1995; Osborne 2006). On the other hand, CG has effectively expanded the public sector by drawing on non-profit, private and a wide range of stakeholder organisations to mobilise resources and to build networks to achieve complex public goals (Kettl 1993; Crosby 2010; Donahue and Zeckhauser 2011; Jing and Hu 2017). However, reforms do not happen overnight. One dominant hypothesis regarding the transition from NPM to CG suggests a layering process, in which reforms supplement or complement one another in a sedimentation process (Christensen 2012). Instead of replacement, constant rebalancing, adjustments, continuities and mixtures of the old and new reform features are evident in the process. That is, reforms are added to previous reforms in a layering approach (Christensen 2012).

Previous studies summarise important transitional characteristics, incentives and conditions, outcomes and complications, and the challenges involved in the transition from NPM to CG (Osborne 2006; Christensen and Lægreid 2010; Halligan 2010; Lodge and Gill 2010; Christensen 2012; Wiesel and Modell 2014; Iacovino et al. 2015; Jing and Hu 2017). Klijn and Teisman (2003) propose an analytical framework for examining the network formation emerging from PPPs based on the Utrecht Centre

project, the Amsterdam South Axis and the Central Station project in the Netherlands. In their analytical framework, they acknowledge that actors in the partnerships are embedded in different networks, resulting in a complex system of decision-making and coordination, and the need to understand the actors, networks, interests and actions involved.

The purpose of this study is to examine the transition from PPPs to network governance instead of treating them as two separate processes. The reason is that, in reality, governments often use both PPPs and network management together. In this study, we adopt Klijn and Teisman's (2003) framework to examine the Safeguard Happiness Station project in Taiwan. More specifically, this study explores how PPPs transformed into network governance. What were the incentives and conditions for transitioning from PPPs to network governance? Furthermore, what was the layering process and mechanisms in the transition from PPPs to network governance? In Taiwan, as discussed in Chapter 1 (this volume) by Podger, Wanna, Su and Yang, the Taiwanese Government has adopted PPP strategies in order to provide infrastructure and deliver services, despite the relatively small size of Taiwan's government and its historical development. The transition from strong, centralised government to more devolved government working with the private and non-government sectors is still evolving in Taiwan and thus provides a unique opportunity for understanding how PPPs are transforming into network governance.

Analytical framework: The layering process

The transition from PPPs to CG is complex and involves a number of dynamic activities. Four main incentives and conditions regarding this transition are identified and summarised in Table 21.1, drawing on key recent literature about public sector reforms at the macro level (Osborne 2006; Christensen and Lægreid 2010; Halligan 2010; Lodge and Gill 2010; Christensen 2012; Wiesel and Modell 2014; Iacovino et al. 2015; Jing and Hu 2017).

Table 21.1: Incentives and conditions for the layering process.

Incentives and conditions	Description	References
Problems associated with the structural devolution embodied in large-scale vertical and horizontal specialisation in NPM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pillarisation of the public sector: a lack of cross-functional thinking and flexibility 2. Undermining of political control 3. A lack of a strong and unified sense of values resulting from diverse economic theories 4. Competitive tendering costs undermining efficiency 5. Practices under NPM too close to the private sector environment 	Christensen and Lægreid 2010; Halligan 2010; Christensen 2012; Iacovino et al. 2015
Fear factor	The need for administrative leaders to tighten government control, share information and coordinate power among agencies to address external threats	Halligan 2010; Christensen 2012
Ease of substantial reforms: Original political-administrative structure and traditions; technical environments	Environmental factors, specifically the process of pursuing modern reforms to address complex problems, may take different paths in different countries, depending on their respective political-administrative structures and traditions, in addition to the environmental and temporal contexts	Christensen and Lægreid 2010
Causes of the paradigmatic shift	Disappointment, surprise and technology	Lodge and Gill 2010

Source: See sources listed throughout table.

First, a typical incentive involves adjusting the affected pillar-like public sector layout to allow greater integration based on coalesced values and trust (Christensen and Lægreid 2010; Christensen 2012). Christensen (2012) explained how this drew on both vertical and horizontal reforms. In the vertical dimension, public administration executives use more central resources to coordinate subordinate institutions and more potent instruments of central control to reclaim the command authority of cross-functional management and to pursue uniform policies across levels. In contrast, in the horizontal dimension, cross-sectoral bodies, programs or projects could be progressively employed to cut across the traditional boundaries applied under NPM practices and to adjust the ‘pillarisation’ in public administration induced by strong sectoral specialisations.

Second, the ‘fear factor’ is an incentive that has advanced the evolution from NPM to CG (Halligan 2010; Christensen 2012); it closely corresponds with the impact of globalisation. Inter-organisational collaborations within networks became important to address shared threats, requiring different agencies to have compatible structures with a convenient information flow and more straightforward management methods. Governments’ recent ‘tightening-up’ practices are considered to be consistent with the reintegration and recentralisation focuses under the CG concept (Christensen and Lægreid 2010:258). It has paved the way for either taking pre-emptive measures against potential crises and disasters in advance or effectively coping with the aftermath of these threats.

Furthermore, the ease of substantial reform depends on the original political–administrative structure, traditions and technical environments (Christensen and Lægreid 2010). Environmental factors also contribute to the transition. Specifically, the process of addressing complexity through modern reforms may take different paths in different countries, depending on their respective political–administrative structures and traditions, as well as their environmental and temporal contexts.

Last, there are three causes of the supposed paradigmatic shift: disappointment, surprise and technology (Lodge and Gill 2010). ‘Disappointment’ is deeply correlated with the motivation and political pressure to seek policy transformations. ‘Surprise’ refers to the idea that policy instruments all have their own assumptions’ loopholes; hence, new policy problems may not be adequately addressed by existing processes. Like the demise of typing pools with advances in computers, ‘technology’ mainly serves as a metaphor for technical advancements in public administration that trigger the abandonment of outdated management models.

Jing and Hu (2017) echo Christensen and Lægreid’s (2010) argument that the enhancement of collaborative networks among agencies is a natural consequence of the transition in the relationship between government and contracted organisations. The evolution of this transition is itself an automatic and unintended process that takes place through three operating mechanisms, including mutual trust generation, resource and capability acquisition, and the consolidation of collaborative accountabilities (Jing and Hu 2017).

To capture the process of the transition from PPP to CG at the micro level, we turn to Klijn and Teisman's (2003) framework. Their framework focuses on the key actors involved, their interests and actions and their emerging networks during the transition. In particular, they examine cases in the Netherlands to reveal the decision-making process during the transition from PPP to CG. Their framework is effective because it helps to identify relevant stakeholders beyond the two parties in the PPP. Additionally, it measures the motivations and interests for forming relationships with other relevant stakeholders outside the partnerships. This framework helps to identify the transition factors, particularly mutual trust generation, resource acquisition and accountability consolidation.

Case study and interviews

Following Yin (2004), we select a unique case in Taiwan, the Safeguard Happiness Station project, to further examine the transition process from PPPs to network governance. To reveal the transition process from PPPs to network governance, we conducted 10 in-depth, face-to-face interviews in 2015 with implementers of the Safeguard Happiness Station project. These included a local official, a social worker responsible for the initiative, local school representatives and convenience store employees with reported cases, etc. (see Appendix A for a list of interviewees). All interviews were guided by interview scripts, which were prepared prior to the interviews.

Safeguard Happiness Station project

The Safeguard Happiness Station project was launched in 2013. As of February 2021, 28,871 students have received meals, and the project is still operating (Education Department of the New Taipei City Government 2021); more recently, the project has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic which has threatened the livelihoods of some families. The project aims to provide timely assistance to needy teenagers and children (under the age of 18). In addition to picking up free meals at convenience stores, these children can be supported with follow-up assistance from government agencies through the project (Lu 2021).

The Safeguard Happiness Station project is part of a broader social protection information system, the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net, in New Taipei City, Taiwan. The program aims to identify children who are in difficult circumstances at an early stage, are neglected or have safety concerns. To do so, New Taipei City partnered with four major convenience store chains (i.e. 7-Eleven, Family Mart, OK Mart and Hi-Life), to provide food assistance by offering emergency food relief to children at local convenience stores. The prevalence of 24-hour convenience stores in the city (approximately 2,000 stores) allows the program to create an extensive social safety net that provides immediate relief to children and teenagers under 18.

To ensure that this partnership works smoothly, the city government has had to consolidate a strong network to coordinate agencies across different departments through a one-stop window. To support the services delivered at local convenience stores, the city government has also worked with primary schools (206) and built a new policy network to promote and monitor the implementation of this policy. As a result, the officials from the New Taipei City Hall realised that they were no longer just managing PPPs; rather, they needed to oversee various networks to ensure the implementation of the PPPs. This therefore provides an excellent case to document the transition from PPPs to CG, following Klijn and Teisman's (2003) framework.

Formation of networks from partnerships

Table 21.2 shows the key actors involved in building networks to sustain the program's PPPs.

Table 21.2: Actors in the Safeguard Happiness Station Project.

Categories of actors		Interests	Means	Roles	Background
Local governments					
Social Welfare Department		Emergency relief and identifying high-risk families (Liu and Chen 2013)	The High-Risk Family Service Management Centre uploads the information provided by the convenience store to the school, and the Social Bureau contacts and provides further assistance to disadvantaged families based on the information returned to schools (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Data processor and provider welfare service (Tsai 2014)	The High-Risk Family Service Management Centre links different departments; according to the attributes of the case, it assigns the following units to be responsible for subsequent counselling and intervention (The principal of Taishan district's New Taipei City Municipal Mingzhi Elementary School C)
Labour Affairs Department		Assisting needy families in becoming employed (Tsai 2014)	Through the understanding of the case, a job is introduced to the family in need (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Helpers	The Labour Affairs Department is included in the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net (Peng and Huang 2015)
Police Department		Public security and crime prevention (Tsai 2014)	Concerned about young people taking meals at night	Crime preventers (Tsai 2014)	The Police Department is included in the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net (Peng and Huang 2015)

Categories of actors	Interests	Means	Roles	Background
Education Department	Making good use of the power of education to turn teachers into social workers (Tsai 2014)	The Education Department is responsible for establishing a SOP with convenience stores and liaising with the counselling office of the schools and 206 principals (The Secretariat of New Taipei City Government) (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Policy promoters (Liu and Chen 2013)	The Education Department and High-Risk Family Service Management Centre have maintained cooperation, and the Education Department has also cooperated with convenience stores (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)
Convenience stores Family Mart: 716 stores 7-Eleven: 852 stores Hi-Life: 301 stores OK Mart: 174 stores Total: 2,043 stores	Corporate social responsibility/organisational culture (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Municipal Xiulang Elementary School)	Providing students with food (to the value of NTD80) and reporting cases to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Service providers	Schools in general maintain a good network with neighbouring convenience stores (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)
Peripheral actors				
All levels of school under high school	Assistance and care for disadvantaged children (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	After the counselling room of the school receives information, the counselling room conducts counselling with and attempts to understand the students, and it asks the teacher to conduct observations and family visits; finally, the school will report the second review and counselling to the Education Department (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Register creators (Tsai 2014)	Schools are scattered in various towns and cities (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Municipal Xiulang Elementary School)

Categories of actors	Interests	Means	Roles	Background
206 school principals of primary schools	Maintaining good interactions with convenience stores (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	Visiting and checking the convenience stores every three months (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary Schools A and B)	Inspectors (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	The school asks the principal to visit nearby convenience stores (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary Schools A and B)
Taiwan Futures Exchange	Charity and contributing to remote areas (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and New Taipei City Elementary School A)	The Taiwan Futures Exchange developed a 'value-added charity' policy to donate NTD30 million for a food bank, which was accompanied by the procurement and delivery services of a store in Taiwan, serving needy families in 22 counties (Interview records of New Taipei City Government)	Resource providers (Interview records of New Taipei City Government)	Cooperating with stores in Taiwan and seven financial institutions (Interview records of New Taipei City Government and Elementary School A)

Note: SOP=standard operating procedure.
Source: See sources listed throughout table.

Key actor in the partnership: The government

The program receives strong public support from the city mayor and is closely supervised by the deputy mayor, and it receives considerable media attention. Consistent with the Government Procurement Act, the government purchases services/goods from convenience stores and engages with all the convenience stores in the towns concerned. The government has simplified the reporting system to a one-page alert sheet, which only requires information on name, attended school and home address. The government has also created a one-stop window for trained partners to report to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre. The convenience stores were granted the flexibility to run their own training on how to deal with sensitive cases and to assist children in completing the report form without undermining their self-esteem. The government is responsible for auditing (i.e. checking all receipts) and monitoring (i.e. sending school principals to visit the stores as community engagement activities). For funding, the government is increasingly seeking charitable donors to support the project, such as the Taiwan Futures Exchange.

Key actor in the partnership: Convenience stores

The four enterprises involved made it clear that the food provided was charged as priced. However, as they are the ones dealing directly with the children in need, they need to conduct training to educate their frontline workers on offering meals and on the reporting protocols. For instance, they are required to provide fulfilling food, not just snacks; they are informed on how to adapt when children are unwilling to provide personal information; and they are trained to provide services based on the good faith principle, that is, adopting a flexible verification standard. Moreover, the enterprises' top management team communicates directly with the responsible government unit, as it is not recommended that government officials talk to individual store managers.

Key actor in the partnership: Schools

The Education Department of the New Taipei City Government is an essential part of the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net because the city government has worked with the local school system to build a community network that monitors the program's implementation. The Education Department and the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre have

worked closely together. In addition, the Education Department has cooperated with convenience stores since 2009 on the 'Happiness Breakfast' project, which provides breakfast subsidies for underprivileged students, laying a solid foundation for later cooperation. As intended by Hou Yu-ih, the deputy mayor of New Taipei City, the Education Department is the driver of the Safeguard Happiness Station project. Deputy Mayor Hou hopes that, with the lead of the Education Department, as many as 20,000 teachers can also play the role of social workers. The Education Department coordinates with convenience stores to map out the details of the project. The standard operating procedure (SOP) is designed to be convenient for the stores, while a smooth line of communication is in place to establish mutual trust on both sides. The Education Department also promotes the project and holds training sessions for local schools' counselling offices and school principals to facilitate the project (Liu and Chen 2013; Tsai 2014).

Junior high schools and primary schools are scattered throughout New Taipei City, providing timely care and assistance to disadvantaged students in the neighbourhoods. When joining the Safeguard Happiness Station project, schools are responsible for speaking to students about the policy. Once the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre informs a school's counselling office about at-risk students, the counselling office takes charge, meets with the students, and has the students' home-room teacher pay extra attention to these students and conduct home visits. Afterwards, the counselling office keeps records and verifies the students' condition and monitors the school's intervention measures before reporting to the Education Department and the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre. Continuous care is also given to students who are enrolled in the project (Tsai 2014).

Actors and interdependencies in the PPP

Table 21.2 describes the parties involved in the Safeguard Happiness Station project and the roles the actors play, the means they contribute and their background. As mentioned earlier, the Safeguard Happiness Station project launched by the New Taipei City Government has been in operation since 1 January 2013. Joined by the city government's Education Department, Labour Affairs Department, Police Department and Social Welfare Department, along with convenience stores, schools and the Taiwan Futures Exchange, the project aims to free children and teenagers under 18 from hunger. Through the project, they can receive meals worth

NTD80 from convenience stores. The convenience stores then share the teenagers' and children's information with other departments, which can provide further assistance. Four major convenience store chains participate in the project. While serving as the stations where the service is offered to teenagers and children, these convenience stores allow students to seek help and access resources from more channels. In addition, through the project, more high-risk families were identified and introduced to allow follow-up tracking and care.

Internal network hub: High-risk family integrated safety net

The High-Risk Family Service Management Centre, supervised by the Social Welfare Department of the New Taipei City Government, is the dedicated agency managing the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net, which connects 10 agencies within the city government. Shiou You-cheng, the principal of Taishan district's New Taipei City Municipal Mingzhi Elementary School, points out that the service management centre connects resources from different departments. It designates administering agencies to arrange further consultation, intervention and emergency assistance services for identified high-risk families based on their respective needs (Liu and Chen 2013; Peng and Huang 2015), and thus forms an internal network within the government to manage this new initiative.

In the Safeguard Happiness Station project, the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre shares the information provided by convenience stores with schools. The schools can view the uploaded information and check whether the students receiving help are from high-risk families. If so, the schools can report back to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre, and the service centre will incorporate these students into the integrated safety net and keep a record of them. Designated officials can then step in and provide further support for the families. Additionally, the Social Welfare Department, which is in charge of coordinating donations from the private sector (such as resources from the food bank, described below), approves and provides meal subsidies via the Education Department. The Social Welfare Department is also in charge of collecting, documenting, processing and analysing relevant data (Tsai 2014).

The Labour Affairs Department of the New Taipei City Government is also part of the High-Risk Family Integrated Safety Net. The goal of the project is to address diverse family issues, often resulting from social and economic

changes. The Labour Affairs Department provides high-risk families with employment training, consultation services and assistance, helping those from underprivileged families find jobs, sustain themselves and overcome their problems (Tsai 2014; Peng and Huang 2015).

The Police Department of the New Taipei City Government is also involved (Peng and Huang 2015). Not only does the department have to maintain public order, secure social safety and prevent criminal activities, but it also has to report high-risk families and identify teenagers in need of care and help. In the project, the Police Department pays particular attention to those who pick up meals at night. Given that some teenagers are not enrolled in high school after graduating from junior high school, the Police Department brings them into the system to reduce juvenile delinquency through the project (Tsai 2014).

External network hub: Convenience store chains

Convenience store chains have taken up corporate social responsibility as an integral part of their corporate culture. Launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Interior, the ‘Safety Corridors and Service Stations of Love’ initiative partnered convenience stores with schools. Convenience stores joining the project serve as a ‘Station of Love’ or a ‘Child Escort Shop’, established to provide help to students at schools in the neighbourhood and to ensure children’s safety on their way back home from school. As participants in the Safeguard Happiness Station project, convenience stores serve as service providers. Stickers for identification are placed outside the stores, and staff members are trained with an easy-to-follow standard operating procedure (SOP): needy students come to the store and choose a meal with a drink under a cap of NTD80. Staff members then ask the students to sign the receipt and allow them to dine in the store. Next, the staff report to the High-Risk Family Service Centre within 24 hours. Finally, the service centre and other relevant agencies track and provide further assistance to the youths.

Audit network hub: The school system

The schools are integral to building a community network that monitors the implementation of the program. There are more than 200 primary schools in the communities covered by the program. After the initial report to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre, the relevant schools were notified within 24 hours to continue subsequent care. Principals also

monitor local stores every three months to check whether the stores are adhering to protocols and the staff understand the program. This emerging school-community network could be established within a short time because it was built on previous initiatives, such as ‘Safety Corridors and Service Stations of Love’. This initiative allows children to go into local convenient stores whenever they feel unsafe and store employees have been trained to assist the children. Building on this previous initiative, the audit network on the main partners, convenient stores, has thus been built by the school system.

Donor network hub: Private and non-profit organisations

The program is not without challenges. One of the greatest concerns raised by critics regarded possible waste and fraud because the program did not require eligibility checks before giving out the food to children. To keep the flexibility of the program while avoiding waste of taxpayer money, the city government decided to raise funds from voluntary contributions by the public who supported this experiment. The Taiwan Futures Exchange was one of the main donors to the program, looking to fulfil its corporate social responsibility. In 2015, the Taiwan Futures Exchange and seven major financial institutions pooled together NTD30 million to establish a food bank with the aim of contributing to society. With the food supply and delivery services provided by Carrefour Taiwan, the initiative has served underprivileged families from 22 cities and counties, including New Taipei City. The total donations from 2015 to 2020 reached NTD210 million (Yu 2020). City and county governments were commissioned to survey and evaluate the needs of their citizens, and then the Taiwan Futures Exchange purchases food and goods through a centralised procurement process from Carrefour Taiwan, which dispatches the resources to food banks across Taiwan and to district offices’ social welfare centres. Ultimately, local social workers and volunteers send food and goods to families in need.

Discussion

This case demonstrates how building an effective partnership is not merely about designing an acceptable contract. Implementing the partnership and monitoring it requires strong networks both within the government and outside the government. These networks were established because they are

needed to ensure that the partnership is achieving its original objective. In the case of the Safeguard Happiness Station project, what started from simple partnerships with private sector actors evolved into network building.

Building a network for improved accessibility

Since the launch of the program in 2013, it has yielded effective results, identifying more than 1,900 at-risk families, distributing more than 28,000 meals, and building a strong community network of 2,000 convenience stores, 206 primary schools and charitable donors. In addition, intergovernmental coordination has been improved (New Taipei City 2021). Our case supports earlier studies showing that CG has evolved to resolve problems associated with the structural devolution embodied in large-scale vertical and horizontal specialisation in NPM (Christensen and Læg Reid 2010; Halligan 2010; Christensen 2012; Iacovino et al. 2015).

For instance, the program has brought effective coordination into the daily tasks of departments, and the chairperson of the district has maintained close relationships with the schools. The reporting of high-risk cases to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre also alerts the police and its teenage-response team to the situation in the district. Subsequently, being aware of the particulars of a case, the Labour Affairs Department is able to offer jobs to families in need. The program has also inspired policy diffusion. The program has been funded by private resources worth over NTD12 million since 2013 (New Taipei City 2021); furthermore, there are now four stock exchanges involved, including the Taiwan Stock Exchange and the Taiwan Futures Exchange (Taiwan Stock Exchange Newsletter 2015), which have further raised substantial resources for food bank programs operated by another government department.

Employees of local convenience stores are able to follow the guidelines because proper procedures are written clearly. Assisting needy children in obtaining food, completing the forms and faxing the forms to the High-Risk Family Service Management Centre for reporting purposes with receipts can all be done efficiently. Nevertheless, there are exceptional circumstances where the government needs to follow up with local convenience stores. For instance, when children incorrectly provide their school affiliation, either accidentally or on purpose, the schools will not be able to follow up on the cases. In the SOP, once the high-risk family information and communication technology (ICT) system receives a report from a convenience store, the next morning, the affiliated school is required to follow up on the case within the same day

and report back to the High-Risk Family committee regarding the case for further evaluation. In cases where affiliated school information is missing, particular actions are needed. Therefore, the government has started to ask local primary schools to take more active roles in working with local convenience stores.

Building a stronger network from existing relationships

Previous literature has found that by supplementing networks to existing coordination mechanisms, significant enhancements in adaptability and flexibility can be observed. Coordination embodied in the interactions among interdependent actors also adds to the effectiveness of service delivery (Christensen 2012; Wiesel and Modell 2014). The Safeguard Happiness Station program involves an internal coordination network by connecting existing policies and initiatives.

For instance, a well-established High-Risk Family Service Management Centre existed within the government to ensure efficient coordination of departments, including social services, education, health, police, and primary schools and high schools. The primary purpose of the centre's ICT case management system is to inform the different government agencies that will handle high-risk families, such as the Education Department, Social Welfare Department, Labour Affairs Department and Police Department. This case management system is an essential technology to ensure the sustainability of the partnership and its expansion to a network system, which echoes Lodge and Gill (2010).

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, prior relationships between the Education Department and convenience stores laid a foundation for building the food assistance program. For example, convenience stores had voluntarily partnered with neighbourhood schools to set up emergency safety stops that provide a safe place for children to stop by when they feel strangers are following them or when they feel unsafe. The stores would then offer help and contact affiliated schools and agencies. The deputy mayor is the head of an interdepartmental committee and thus gives this committee the legitimacy to mobilise resources and obtain information from across the departments. A thorough SOP has been written regarding how each agency needs to respond to the information from discovering high-risk families, following up and providing solutions to support the families for a six-month period. This existing system also makes it easier for the city government to

build a one-window policy with its private partners. The city government has delegated one person to be in charge of all communication with the four private partners and allows approximately 2,000 local stores to fax any discovery of a high-risk family to a database of the high-risk families.

Building a network for accountability and mentoring

Our case also confirms prior studies, which suggest that governments need to design systems to ensure accountability and control through information-sharing and coordination with contracted agencies to address external threats (Halligan 2010; Christensen 2012).

Being aware of the existing relationships between the convenience stores and local schools, the New Taipei City Government set up a protocol to activate the local network to monitor the implementation of the policy and to create a safety net when the SOP did not work. Local schools are now also in charge of checking whether local convenience stores have properly set up signs bearing the policy slogan so that children know that they can obtain emergency food in the stores. Such collaboration is essential when a private partner is required to perform actions that cannot be specified in a formal contract or agreement. Unobservable performance can be reinforced through informal relationships, such as community ties between schools and local convenience stores. The resultant network strengthens ties between schools and local convenience stores ensuring that actions are taken in more informal ways and disputes can be resolved without hurting the formal partnerships.

Conclusions

This case demonstrates how the adoption of a network as a policy tool can maintain and monitor and extend an existing partnership, consistent with Klijn and Teisman's 2003 study. This case demonstrates how the local government was able to utilise the existing coordination system and build new and more effective ways to achieve its policy objectives, in this case to discover and better support high-risk families. In other words, the local government did not have to build everything from scratch. Instead, it set up new collaborative partnerships over an established and reasonably robust system. Adopting networks helped the local government overcome the challenges of managing its partnerships with the private sector. In creating

these networks, the local city government has also faced novel challenges that require new attention and governance skills from its employees. Future research might explore further whether the success of such a network governance in Taiwan is linked to Taiwan's particular institutional arrangements or a culture that supports collaboration.

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Appendix: Interview list

Org. ID	Date	Position	Name of organisation
2601	15 August 2015	Officer	New Taipei City Government
2602	15 August 2015	Project manager	New Taipei City Government
2603	15 August 2015	Social worker	New Taipei City Government
2604	25 August 2015	Officer	Education Department, New Taipei City Government
2605	27 August 2015	Counsellor	Counselling office, elementary school A
2606	27 August 2015	Employee	Convenience store B
2607	15 Sept. 2015	Principal	Elementary school
2608	15 Sept. 2015	Employee	OK Mart convenience store
2609	16 Sept. 2015	Principal	Elementary school C
2610	16 Sept. 2015	Employee	Convenience store B

Source: Author's summary.

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