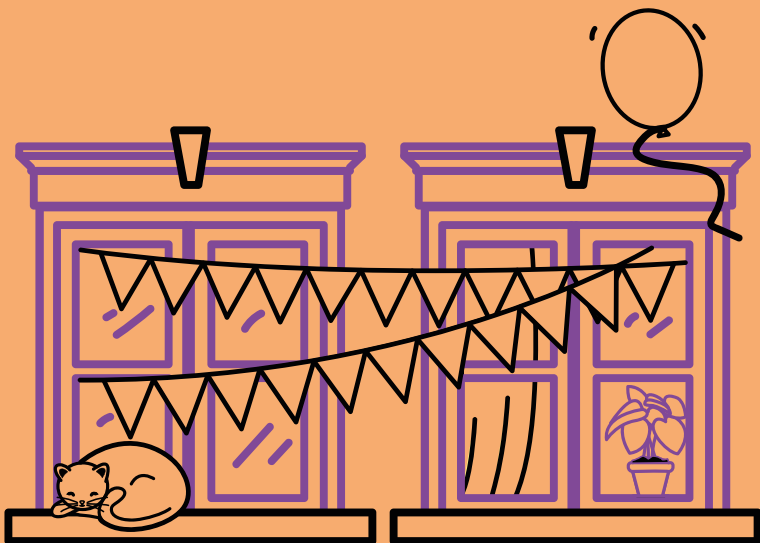


Netzwerk der Wärme A Report

How new action can succeed in the crisis



Philip Hector, Robert Jende, Blasius Walch



NETZWERKDERWÄRME

A Report

How new action can succeed in a crisis

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Dear Berliners,

Hardly has one of the many crises of recent years been somewhat managed, a new one is already looming over us. They intersect, influence each other, and create unexpected, surprising interactions, disrupting the rhythm of our everyday lives.

One of the challenges of our times is the rise in energy costs and the cost of living, which are affecting many of us. The *Network of Warmth* was initiated and supported by the state of Berlin to cushion the impacts of the energy crisis.

We would like to share with you, the citizens of Berlin, our observations from implementing the program.

In this case, “we” refers to the *KARUNA* Social Cooperative, collaborating with the Civil Society Crisis Unit to address the challenges of cascading crises, drawing from extensive practical experience gained during past periods of “challenges.”

The *Network of Warmth*, in response to the energy crisis, has reached and supported over 460 establishments in our city, such as community centers, intergenerational houses, libraries, social organizations, cultural institutions, and initiatives, each with their unique projects.

These establishments and groups are true spaces of empowerment that, in our opinion, often receive too little recognition and appreciation, despite their diligence, creativity, diversity, and impact, contributing significantly to social harmony in the city. They are the ones who offer practical support, organize help for self-help when our daily lives go awry. Perhaps you are a part of such a Berlin establishment or initiative yourself and already feel like

a creator of your living environment. That would bring us great joy.

The aim of this report is to aid us all in better comprehending how we need to collaborate in the future as climate change and other crises concurrently challenge us. As a result, we've enlisted sociologists to accompany us for several months in implementing the *Network of Warmth*.

Discover for yourself how novel actions can prosper during times of crisis, and with the aid of this report, let's grasp what has already been executed much more effectively and why. Valuable insights await within this report.

Warm regards,
KARUNA Social Cooperative
Jörg Richert

NdW A Report

Man and society are literally facing a turning point. Albert Einstein's statement that one cannot solve problems with the same way of thinking that caused them hits the nail on the head sociologically. The structures, institutions and the people living in them are constantly paving the way to disaster without being able to prevent it. Not only rethinking is required, but also redirecting, doing things differently, forming new connections and changing ways of relating. It is necessary to change the organised irresponsibility that has been established and practised in this country - and elsewhere - for decades, to responsible and accountable cooperation. Mistakes are part of every reality of life. The art of shaping the future is to learn from mistakes and to approach things differently accordingly. Because otherwise, the same habits, structures and concepts will create, exacerbate and pile up the same problems - as we can see.

In addition to a changed way of thinking and experimenting, the temporality in which we will meet future challenges is also changing. The linear time of 'always further, higher faster' is being replaced by a discontinuous duration characterised by local adaptation efforts and a development of intended social mutability. This enables us, on the one hand, to react to crises in a situation-appropriate, precise and quick manner, and on the other hand, to act in a preventive, far-sighted manner.

In order not to continue this process as a blind flight and to be surprised over and over again by unexpected side effects, a different way of dealing with

knowledge is needed. The scientific observation and delivery of facts, shouldn't be understood as an offer in a huge department store, but include the participation of everyone and everything affected, in order to integrate reflexivity, feedback and direct adjustments into the transformation processes. If knowledge about living well (together) - and that includes our natural livelihoods and peculiar fellow creatures - is to become effective, science must become performative. This is especially true for sociology, because every change, whether of a technical, political or ecological nature, takes place in a society. For us humans, transformation is primarily a social problem.

With new forms of collaboration, the great transformation that awaits every individual and all of us with this turning point can be shaped prudently. This requires active subjects of change and not objects doomed to bear one crisis after another in the rigid scaffolding of the administered world. With the Network of Warmth, some stakeholder have begun to try out new forms of co-creation. This addresses and generates subjects capable of action. This report sheds light on this extraordinary process of cooperation; on obstacles, conflicts and opportunities, small and big successes. At best, it can inspire others to experiment with constructive modes of shaping society and point to ways of a democratic politics of cooperation.

Dr. Robert Jende, performative sociology

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Introduction

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a war against Ukraine, which has resulted in inflation and rising energy prices for citizens. Against the backdrop of strong income and wealth inequality, such a basic needs crisis does not affect all people equally. Those who already live at or below the subsistence level are hit existentially by rising energy prices. Berlin is strongly affected by this. According to the Federal Statistical Office, 19.3% of Berliners lived on the poverty line in 2019.¹

With the *Network of Warmth*, Berlin has reacted to mitigate the consequences of the crisis for citizens. The website of the Network of Warmth states:

*“The Network of Warmth is an association of various civil society actors and the state of Berlin. The aim is to help all Berlin citizens quickly and unbureaucratically in the face of rising energy and living costs. This help is provided by the institutions participating in the Network of Warmth.”*²

In this report, we have summarized how the network functions, what it can and cannot achieve. The report is intended both to promote understanding of collaborative forms beyond party-political disputes or constraint-oriented bureaucracies and at the same time to point to the need for accompanying research on such processes. For only by reflecting on political measures and processes of social change can conclusions be drawn about what works well and what side-effects are caused. With this report, we thus plead for reflective and reflexive change processes that transparently include their own effects

and learn from mistakes. The most effective transformation prevention is the absence of error culture and reflexivity (cf. Moldaschl 2010).

With stacking crises piling up, there is no one path that a majority could choose and the tide would turn. Better seem to be smaller units of *collaborative politics* that can react quickly to crises and, at best, even ensure that crises do not arise in the first place. “Only what is *considered normal* by social majorities can actually claim normative efficacy and hold up as empirical reality.” (Lessenich 2022, p. 34). In this respect, something quite extraordinary happened in Berlin when the possibility of a different politics formed in the aftermath of the Ukraine war. The crisis created a positive *state of emergency* within which it was possible to act quite differently. This report is about this remarkable event.

¹ Federal Agency for Civic Education: <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/zahlen-und-fakten/soziale-situation-in-deutschland/158610/armuts-gefaehrungsquoten-nach-bundeslaendern/> (last accessed: 03.05.2023)

² www.netzwerkderwaerme.de/fuer-einrichtungen/ (last accessed: 03.05.2023)

How can we work well together to remain able to act in crises?

This report thus deals with the question of how the interaction between the administration and civil society functions in crisis situations and what lessons can be learned from the *Network of Warmth* (hereinafter referred to as the Network or *NdW*) for future crises..

In times of stacked crises - from the 2007/2008 financial crisis, the so-called refugee crisis in 2015, to the Corona crisis from late 2019, to the Ukraine crisis from 2022 - crises are increasingly the “new normal” (Tierney 2014, 238). In the face of the collapse of a reality constructed and perceived as normal, right-wing conservative parties and media houses are blowing up a storm. “Stability and unity, the slogans “No experiments!” and #gemeinsamstark, mark the collective horizon of meaning in a contemporary society confronted with ever new crises” (Lessenich 2022, p. 34). Against this backdrop, the previous organisational structure of public administration is reaching its limits, as the structures are geared towards producing a normality that has become unsustainable.

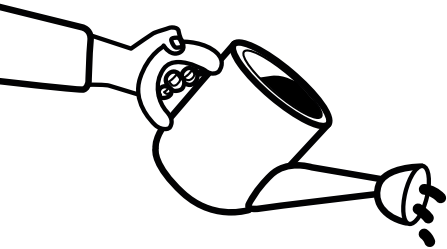
Democratic structures and long-established bureaucracies can be very ponderous and always arrive a little too late when it comes to reacting quickly and precisely to an urgent challenge. In the case of the Ukraine crisis, the *NdW*, reported from the administration: “As a state, we would never have been able to get it together in such a short response time. [...] We were involved in the talks and brought the relevant people together. In this case, civil society and business.” [V04] In a short time, a problem-solving coalition of actors from different sectors was formed to find a common - and quick - response to the

crisis. The principle of *collaboration* came into play.

The experience of the organised civil society involved in the *NdW* shows that between the beginning of the crisis and concrete administrative action, “*there is a vacuum of action of 2 to 4 weeks, in which civil society then has to step in*” [ZGO01]. This aligns with research on firefighting operations: Based on firefighting terminology, Frommer and Epple (2022, p. 42) referred to this initial phase of re-adjustment the “*chaos phase*”. When a crisis begins, civil society actors are usually the first on the scene and try to put out the fire quickly. However, the civil society institutions that primarily cushion the crises socially are also often affected by the same crises (Schrader et al. 2020). Thus, Hummel et al. (2022, p. 4) write: “Most civil society organisations have no financial reserves and are often characterised by precarious organisational and working conditions.” Additional burdens resulting from the crises exacerbate this situation. The first responders are not particularly well equipped themselves, but they can react quickly in an emergency and organise and target help that is supported by citizens.

The four phenomena - (1) the crisis as a new normality, (2) the systemically delayed reaction of administrations, (3) civil society as a substitute fire brigade and (4) thereby burdened entities that are already structurally under-supplied - form the problem context of the *Network of Warmth*. The envisaged solution is to reconfigure the cooperation of civil society, administration, politics and business in order to become capable of acting in the long term. The establishment of the *NdW* is an example of the creation of supportive structures, which ultimately

led to a civil society crisis team - *KriSta*³. With the accompanying research, we want to find out what can be learned from this for future crises.



³ www.krista.berlin

The method

The results of the report summarised here are based on 11 guided qualitative interviews between 45 minutes and one hour with actors of the network from the Berlin *administration* (V) and *civil society* (ZGO). To ensure anonymity of the individual respondents, we have used [V0...] or [ZGO0...] to label the quotes, as indicated in the introduction. Five people from the administration [V0...] took part, three from leading positions and two staff members. From civil society organisations [ZGO0...], 6 people were interviewed, 3 from Karuna and 3 from participating institutions.

The following questions were central to our investigation:

1. how can the needs of citizens be identified through the *NdW*?
2. how does the *NdW* create new forms of cooperation: information flows, relationships and ways of communication?
3. How does the network increase the ability of the actors involved to act in crisis situations?

In addition to the expert interviews, we participated in 3 events of the network with participatory observations, which mainly brought together the participating institutions from civil society. The meetings lasted between two and four hours. We also participated in 13 internal meetings between Karuna and the administration.

We processed, correlated, ordered and condensed the collected data material - interviews, transcripts, observation protocols, scientific literature research - in joint reflection loops, in contemplation with civil society actors

Field of research

and other comparative coding practices with the help of *Grounded Theory Methodology* (cf. Strauss, Corbin 1990). From this, we have worked out characteristic phenomena and features for the network, which are presented here for debate. This report is intended to let the voices of the *NdW* speak. We want to show what potential the network offers, what hopes it cannot fulfil, what frustrates and what we can learn from this process for the future. The processing of the collected data follows the logic of qualitative social research and therefore claims to be neither representative nor complete. Contrary to this claim, which cannot be realised anyway, we want to shed light on an unusual process that can be of decisive importance for the future of crisis-resilient politics.

Crises are seen as turning points. A crisis is defined as the overturning of legitimate institutional orders and routines ('t Hart 1993). It opens up opportunities for change (Cortell and Peterson 1999), and also leads to blame attribution and increased demands for transparency (Hood 2011). The meaningful accountability of public institutions to their citizens can thus lead to further bureaucratisation in times of crisis (Seibel, 2016)

As crises push institutions to their limits and force new processes, improvisation is a crucial skill in a crisis. However, working outside the rules only means improvisation if it is effective, otherwise it is quickly seen as deviation or even failure (Boine and Lodge 2016). Here is an example:

“We did a lot of things in parallel, the app was already uploaded with the locations, [...] then the individual participants didn't always communicate everything to every employee [...] Journalists went to individual locations and then just met the person who didn't yet know [about them].” [V03]

This situation is further complicated by time pressure, which poses the following dilemma: rapid action to combat the crisis vs. accountability to citizens and legal processes (Mende et al. 2021). Consequently, administrations must accept particular risks in crisis situations. At the same time, the ability to improvise contradicts the logic of bureaucratic procedures, namely to follow standards and standardised processes (cf. Boine and Lodge 2016).

An empirically comprehensive perspective on these challenges can be found in Mende et al. (2021), who studied more than 200 municipalities in the 2015 refugee crisis and came up with the following recommendations for action: (1) exemplify an appreciative culture; (2) establish new communication channels and institutionalise cooperation formats after crises; (3) conduct joint crisis resilience exercises; (4) maintain the simplifications legitimised by crises as far as possible; (5) promote horizontal and vertical communication in terms of time and funding; (6) evaluate crisis experiences and make them accessible for future situations and personnel.

However, in the discourse on resilient institutions, administrations are only represented to a limited extent. Some authors argue that they have been sidelined by a focus on routine processes and that it is time to re-establish crisis management as a central task (Boin & Lodge 2016). With regard to the above recommendations, the actors in the *NdW* have underlined how they have established new communication channels and cooperation formats (cf. 2) and want to institutionalise joint exercises (cf. 3): “*What we have are very resilient cooperation and communication structures with organised urban society.*” [In addition, this report is intended to suggest an evaluation of the crisis experiences (cf. 6), to support recommendations for institutionalisation (cf. 4) and promotion (cf. 5), and to better equip actors involved in crisis management.

However, part of the lack of crisis preparation is also found at the political level. Spending money on things that are not visible and do not reach the citizen in a strik-

ing way does not fit into the logic of the system: “*Politics also has a hard time spending money on things that are not directly visible, where the citizen does not know, oh yes, here is my bicycle path, my beautiful library, the new football stadium.*” [V05] In the best case, good crisis infrastructures do not become visible because the normal state is not disrupted too much, like many infrastructures that remain invisible until they fail (Moss 2016; Van Laak 2018). So there is a systemic problem here, as politics, usually organised in 4 or 5-year cycles, wants to show off successes instead of making invisible investments. This also shows that in crisis situations, different temporalities such as cyclical and short-term collide.

A special form of crisis preparation are the crisis teams, which are equally invisible to citizens and represent the central advisory and communication body in crises (Hofinger and Heimann 2022). Crisis teams fulfil the above-mentioned recommendations for action 2 and 3 on routine communication and cooperation. On the part of the administration, however, the handling of crisis teams seems to be very different and generally rather distant, although the advantages of these bodies have been known for a long time (ibid.). However, in the course of the Covid19 pandemic, a temporary revival of the crisis teams took place, which in the best case will be made permanent in a reduced form: “*This institutionalisation is the result of me forming the crisis team several times, scaling it back and now we have drawn the consequence, but for the entire state of Berlin.*” [V04]

In addition to this intra-administrative form of crisis teams, there is intensified activity by civil society actors.

Clarke, in her study of volunteering in 21 formal organisations, notes *“a new wave of volunteering in crisis situations that seems to differ both quantitatively and qualitatively from previous patterns”* (Clarke 2015, p. 78). According to the study, this trend is in line with the academic literature on volunteering in crisis situations (such as natural disasters). The crisis mentioned at the beginning as a *“positive state of emergency”* and impetus for change also means that new strategies become possible for the work of these actors. For example, in Greece during the refugee crisis, it was observed how the clear boundaries between formality/informality and legality/illegality blurred, so that social actors adapted to strengthen suspended rights (Simiti 2017).

Therefore Crises require adaptability from all involved actors on practical, structural and narrative levels. This includes internal work processes and specific knowledge, the structures that enable communication and cooperation with other actors, and ultimately a changed understanding of the roles of their own work.

Collaboration as a mode of working together

The word *co-laborare* means to work with or together. Jascha Rohr defines collaboration as “cooperation organised to solve problems better, to find ideas faster and to promote exchange and relationships in general” (Rohr 2013, p. 31). The *NdW* uses this close type of collaboration without a “coordination marathon” and thus establishes a cross-departmental crisis intervention structure. In this way, the *NdW* is testing what, in an expanded understanding of democracy, can be a future form of participation by a wide variety of actors in responding more quickly and appropriately to crises. Even those people from politics, administration, NGOs, civil society and citizens can work together in a collaborative way, whose intersections normally hardly lead to each other. “Where at present attitudes such as malice, exposure, blame and deliberate misunderstanding often prevail, the concept of collaboration suggests problem-solving and mediating attitudes through which we are able to mediate the different perspectives of social sectors” (ibid., p. 32).

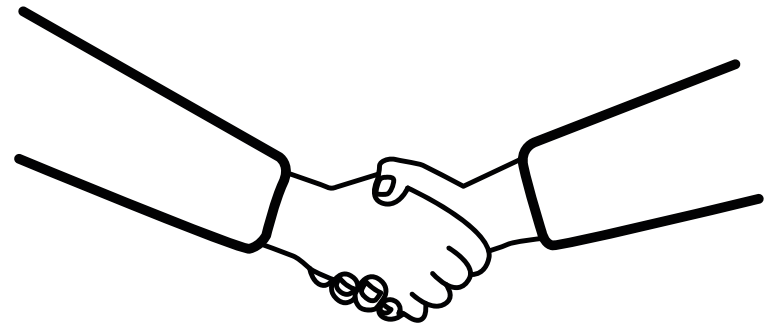
To counter crises, it is crucial that as many actors and institutions as possible cooperate “across factions, ideologies and milieus” (ibid.). Collaboration enormously increases the opportunities for participation in social design processes and can involve many more actors and coordinate them with each other. At the same time, the collaborative process becomes more demanding and complicated. Such collaboration requires professional mediation, good organisation and, last but not least, is based on mutual trust.

Trust is the lubricant of a functioning society. It

serves as the basis for solidarity, mutual confidence in the actions of others and confidence in oneself. Trust “always exists in relationships - relationships with oneself, family, friends, society at large” (Allmendinger, Wetzel 2020, p. 8). Those who have nothing and no one have little reason to trust. Thus, it is usually the weakest in a society who have the least trust in their surroundings and institutions. Collaborative networks can shorten the distances and connect different actors, institutions and citizens with each other through a purposeful interlocking and thus create familiar conditions. Trust is always based on experience and is an advance on the assumption that everything will be fine, without knowing exactly why. On the one hand, trust functions as a lubricant as a bet on the future; on the other hand, the bets must also pay off. Without control, trust is therefore also not possible, but mere control stifles all trust from the outset.

The cooperation of very different social sub-sectors is usually based on formal control procedures in order to couple different logics with each other. Trust rarely plays a role, since the legitimacy of the respective action is to be guaranteed by procedures (Luhmann 1983). In the mode of collaboration, however, trust cannot be placed on mere procedure. Cross-sectoral connections are made that require new procedures that must first be established on the fly in the immediate context of the crisis. This report is also about this: which connections were made, which actors emerged in the process, how a crisis team emerged in the handling of a crisis and what lessons can be learned from

this for the possibility of a collaborative - that is: *situation-appropriate, cooperative, cross-sectoral, solidarity-based* - policy.



Phenomena and analysis

Four recurring phenomena found at all levels have emerged as essential for coordinating the network's action. Such rapid and crisis averting action requires a seamless interlocking of the different actors, institutions, facilities, bureaucratic requirements, money flows, etc. Cooperation becomes a necessary working principle where different actors and logics often work against each other - whether intentionally or not. Nevertheless, cooperation in the NdW is generally described more positively than expected: *"... that private sector, public sector, [and] urban society can work together so spontaneously towards a common goal, that is what I had hoped for, but would not have imagined that it would work like this"* [V04]. In the following, the most important narratives that influence the coordination of action in the NdW are summarised.

I. Narrative

A climate of fear and a long-practiced culture of error avoidance within public authorities is not particularly helpful in putting processes on a fast track. Often there is (rightfully!) insecurity in dealing with public money (1). When it comes to concretely helping citizens or letting them take matters into their own hands, they are often treated as supplicants. The lack of trust or the practised culture of mistrust and control towards citizens is a deeply rooted method of preventing transformation (2). In contrast, at the management level of the administration, there is an understanding of crises as the new normal and, associated with this, the will to act with foresight and without fear (3). Despite all this, the cooperation leads to a general disillusionment of social institutions regarding the question of whether they are guaranteed any

funds at all (4). Those who are always disappointed are wary of forming positive hopes. Faced with these historically ingrained, extremely effective path dependencies, the Network of Warmth tries a few shortcuts.

Fear of spending money on new things

"Districts are afraid to make mistakes and hire people, spend money if it's something new." [V05]

Since the fall of communism until 2014, the number of employees in the public sector in Germany has been reduced by a good third due to the need to save money (Federal Statistical Office 2014). While Berlin has about 120,000 administrative employees per 3.7 million inhabitants⁴, the city of Helsinki has about 38,000 administrative employees per 600,000 inhabitants⁵. The 'staff per inhabitant' ratio in Helsinki is therefore twice as high as in Berlin. We refer to Helsinki because the Nordic countries are considered a showcase in the field of citizen services and administrative modernisation (de la Porte et al. 2022). Even though the resources of the districts have been increased, an experience of resource poverty seems to be deeply ingrained: *"But this is still in the DNA of many people in the administration [...] Am I allowed to spend any money at all? People also cut back on personnel because they used to save money there."* [V05] It is possible that the austerity measures that were rigorously implemented by the SPD in Berlin at the beginning of the 2000s are still having an effect.

⁴www.karriereportal-stellen.berlin.de/Initiativbewerbung-2023-de-j32711.html

⁵www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/information/helsinki-as-employer/

This is also reflected in the way new staff are recruited in the district, which was desired in the face of the crisis and the implementation of the *NdW*, but often implemented only timidly - the range is between six and forty new positions. *“Why did you only hire six people in the district?”* - *“Yes, we managed it that way too.”* [V05] While the reasons for this can also be found in individual understandings of roles (see Phenomenon II), it stands to reason that the above-mentioned attitude towards finances influences this behaviour. Those offices that were allowed to staff in a relatively uncomplicated and forward-looking manner, but did not implement it in a timely and comprehensive manner, were sometimes overloaded with requests in the autumn. It seems that the attitude of the employees continues to be shaped by the conviction that, as a public organisation, they have to be stingy towards self-constructed “suplicants” (see phenomenon III).

The caution that was in principle appropriate with regard to applying for funds for new staff positions could be influenced to a certain extent by written confirmations at the level of the state secretaries and senators. Some district employees had waited until the money was actually transferred, despite the certainty of the situation, with the reason: *“I don't have the money in my account yet”* [V05] - although even the reply from the highest level, *“but it is in the budget and there is a Senate resolution”* [V05], could not necessarily dissolve this caution. In other cases, the districts took action after receiving letters with precise figures from the highest decision-making level. In both cases, however, this practised wait-and-see led to a delay in staff recruitment that was diametrically opposed to the

urgency of a crisis situation and should actually be avoided. An organisation and its staff are not free from their practised rituals, but should be aware of them in order to avoid unnecessary delays in urgent crisis situations.

Proactive action despite uncertainties

“The moment you decide to be a leader, you can't go to the fear model.” [V03]

The timid fear of spending money on new things is countered by those responsible at the highest management level who share the conviction that their role requires adaptability, especially in unpredictable situations. *“We are now simply working in the knowledge that this will come at some point, but we have not yet had any power of control over the money, and then you realise how long such procedures as allocations, decisions and so on take.”* [V03] Thus, the reasons for a course of action are always influenced by how a person believes he or she can achieve these goals given the circumstances. Decision-makers are only sufficiently informed in exceptional cases, as all relevant facts are never known when a decision is made (cf. Weibler and Thielmann 2022).

In addition to the will to act, the recognition of potential crises on the basis of weak signals is one of the most important crisis skills for managers in administration (Boin et al. 2005). An awareness that crisis mode is the new normal was present in all interviews with decision-makers. *“This is about the crisis resilience administration. We don't know yet exactly what the next crisis will be, but we know*

there will be one." [So-called "weak signals" are based on findings from futurology (Holopainen and Toivonen 2012) and an understanding of these connections is increasingly considered a prerequisite for leadership positions in government work (cf. Kimbell and Vesnić-Alujević 2020). Thus, based on an uncertain state of affairs, far-reaching decisions have to be made in a short time and the implementation coordinated.

Citizens as Supplicants

"...in many other places the citizen is still very distant and seen as a supplicant rather than a partner"[V05].

According to the website of the NdW, the aim is *"to assist all Berlin citizens quickly and unbureaucratically in the face of rising energy and living costs. This help is provided by the institutions participating in the Network of Warmth".*⁶ Although the goal is clearly defined and tailored to a target group - the citizens of Berlin - their needs were not directly solicited through citizen participation before and during the project. This represents a missed opportunity for citizen participation. This may be due to time constraints and the diversity of the different neighbourhoods. Although it can be assumed that institutions and social organisations generally have an insight into the needs of the citizens who use their services, the question remains open: Are there citizens who are not reached by the services and what happens to them?

⁶ FAQs at www.netzwerkderwaerme.de/fuer-einrichtungen/ (last accessed: 03.05.2023)

For future projects, it would be interesting to include findings about needs in the planning process instead of relying on the often underlying paternalistic view of knowing what is good for others as the bureaucratic arm of the state (cf. Graeber 2015). In Berlin, for example, there is the project of mobile neighbourhood⁷ work, which records and documents the needs of citizens in the various neighbourhoods. In addition, a network of democracy cafés is currently being set up in order to empower citizens in their local living environment by bringing them into action based on their needs.⁸

Disillusioned applicants

There also seems to be an entrenched mental model on the part of the applicants in the civil society organisations, according to which there are reservations in principle about applying at all or applying for sums that enable a longer-term perspective: *"They wanted 2,000 €. There are many institutions that are so disillusioned that they can't even imagine that they would get more money, and they have never applied for anything."* [ZGO02] This would mean that not only administrations but also social institutions do not dare to apply for funds that are obviously needed. Here one would have to look for structural disappointments that have established a deeply rooted culture of mutual mistrust and fear.

⁷ www.stadtteilzentren.de/fachverband/projekte-des-vska-berlin/mobile-stadtteilarbeit/ (last accessed: 03.05.2023)

⁸ www.demokratiecafe.de

II. Social figures

What are social figures?

In different contexts, at different times of day, for different purposes, we encounter people in the world who play a role. On the one hand, roles fulfil social functions within an organisation of coexistence based on the division of labour; on the other hand, people can be *important to us* - they matter to us. In a sociological sense, a role is a certain repertoire of behaviours, symbols of power and outward appearances to carry out the thing for which the role is socially intended. Certain expectations are attached to a role, which in turn limit the scope within a particular domain. The interplay of different roles - such as kindergarten teacher, senator, policeman or cook - roughly results in what is called normality. Roles are arranged within a relatively rigid social structure, but they can be performed in different ways: for example, wittily, pedantically, charmingly, dedicatedly, generously, mercilessly, creatively, politely, disciplinarily, cooperatively, confrontationally, enjoyably listlessly, etc. The execution the play within and with the role, depends on the person performing the role.

There are different *personalities* within the expected patterns of behaviour and function of the role bearers. An enabling personality can come to a very different conclusion than an obstructive one: one finds a language course, a child-mother centre and employment for the single Afghan mother, the other simply deports her. So it definitely makes a difference *who* plays which role in which position. A certain personality in different social positions or contexts - for example, as a mother as well as a boss - will also display a similar way of performing

her role. A personality is “a unique, relatively enduring and stable behavioral correlate in every person” (Herrmann 1976, p. 25). Mercilessness as well as generosity manifests itself in the respective personality here as well as there, albeit in varying degrees of intensity. The role provides the context as well as the behaviour and action repertoire, the personality provides the role with its appearance and effectiveness within the framework of its possibilities.

In addition to roles that are performed by certain personalities in order to fulfil social tasks organised according to the division of labour, there are also more unbound *social figures*. They are “characterised by the fact that they cross the different spheres” (Moebius and Schroer 2010, p. 8). Counsellors, amateurs, experts, hackers, divas and many more are cited as examples. Social figures are “(ideal) types that in their totality order the social” (ibid., p. 9). Although they also play a role, they have more leeway to cross paths within the social order, to create entirely new paths or to attack the order as such - the spectrum thus ranges from meaningful improvisation to challenging social orders. Social figures emerge within a society at different times. Before the recognition and implementation of the stock exchange as a market-ordering authority, the speculator - i.e. the money player - made little sense or was despised (Stäheli 2010). Social figures come and go, they set societies in motion, spread a certain practice, can take on different roles and are not necessarily bound to one function. Accordingly, they can also open up new fields of activity. They flourish and organize, change, and preserve.

In which way they do this depends again on the personality, but here much more strongly, because certain social figures first create or spread certain personalities. To be a clan boss, I need an authoritarian ruthlessness. To become a clan boss, I have to acquire these personality traits. The idealised typification of this figure serves as a role model so that I can then perform this role convincingly. In this way, different social types at different times structure a society in a particular way. In the NdW, too, we have come across typical role bearers, different personalities and special social figures that structure the field and have influenced the process.

Guides and intermediaries

“We call them “participation guides”. In the future, there will be people in all community centers who will basically operate as an interface. And then it's a question of: What is not covered in the system?” [VO4] This statement reports on a SenIAS project on the participation of people with disabilities to secure their livelihood. The guide function described here resembles key roles in the NdW, which were called intermediaries, hinges or multipliers and influenced cooperation and the flow of information. However, the guide is more than a facilitator. According to the definition, the guide is a *“seafarer who knows the place and guides ships through difficult waters”*⁹ - he or she is thus able to avoid obstacles, even on non-obvious paths, due to practical experience. There is thus the explicit reference to turbulence and an ability to improvise, which is why this social figure is a useful extension to the intermediary for crisis interventions.

⁹ www.dwds.de/wb/Lotse (last accessed: 24.05.23)

In comparison, the *intermediary*, which is supposed to act as a catalyst between other actors, is a common term in transformation processes (Kivimaa et al. 2019). Intermediaries can establish contacts, share knowledge, positively influence narratives, provide financial resources or adapt legal processes.

We differentiate between guides and intermediaries as follows: The intermediary is one of the roles in the NdW, while guides as a social figure perform their function somewhat more freely and independently. Guides know shortcuts or dare to improvise. Guides lead personally instead of passing on information for mediation.

One of Karuna's staff members was the contact person for facilities, i.e. she was available for questions, dropped off the promotional materials for increased visibility and asked what the needs and difficulties were. *“She has an eye on everything and can kind of approach everything and transmit information, is able to network, give assistance, and [knows] everyone's problems and also potentials.” [ZGO04]* The requirements were *“either money, staff, spaces or visibility” [ZGO02]*. While the first two were not within the staff member's power, she was able to create synergies between institutions because she knew, for example, which institution had larger rooms available and which initiatives needed something like that.

In the case of disagreements between the Senate, the districts and the institutions, she was able to help with the temporary hiring of new staff over the duration of the project. One institution said: *“We need more people” [ZGO02]*, which the pilot passed on with the help of con-

tacts in the senate: *“And then I communicated that and two weeks later an employment was possible.”* [ZGO02] The role of the contact person for facilities in the *NdW* is thus reminiscent of a “user mediator” who, firstly, connects new practices with everyday life and, if necessary, configures or forwards (future) requirements that the user community has to the dominant system (see also Phenomenon III Co-operation) so that adjustments were made there. This adaptation represents a key to “experimental governance”, i.e. a pragmatic approach to politics that always treats solutions as incomplete and based on assumptions, thus making them amendable (cf. Sabel and Zeitlin 2012).

Intermediaries and guides can thus experience specific knowledge on the spot and pass it on to the decision-making level. In this way, they can bring simplified categories of bureaucracy closer to the real lifeworld of those affected. While categorising a bureaucracy helps to reduce complexity vis-à-vis the addressed lifeworld, it also means that the small but important and characteristic differences of those affected are lost (cf. Graeber 2015).

The guide role also seems to enable a further “humanisation” of the bureaucracy, which is usually perceived as cold, by building up trust, since participants notice: *“Here someone is really interested in our projects, there is a person behind it, he helps us, he is our contact person.”* [ZGO04] Through the feeling of being seen and heard, the actors in the network can be better motivated to further implement their own projects.

A hybrid intermediary is the *chatbot Norbärt*, which can be found online on the *NdW* map and makes first aid measures accessible to concerned citizens. This

chatbot provides low-threshold access to information when it comes to issues such as rent bills, gas bills or back energy payments. This is intended to help people *“who are afraid to go directly to the neighbourhood centre or to seek help, to get information first. What options do I have?”* [ZGO03].

The chatbot was created on the initiative of Karuna, which also took over the development. In consultation with the Senate, Karuna was referred to other agencies in order to use existing expertise. The development was done in cooperation with e.g. the Diakonie who already had experience with questions on the ground, were more legally versed and thus increased the quality of the chatbot. For a similar exchange of expertise, an expert from the consumer advice center was invited online and on site to provide detailed information on consumer rights in the prevailing complexity of energy contracts.

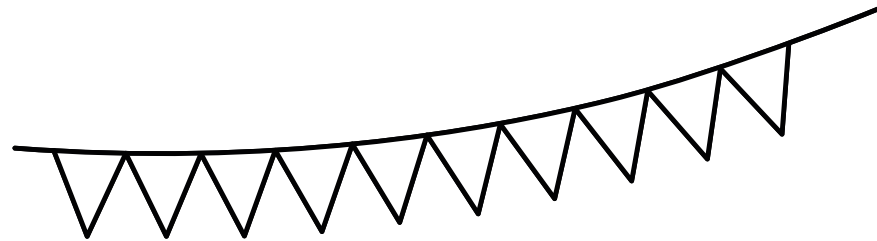
In addition to the individual intermediaries (Phenomenon II), the several hundred institutions also play a mediating role, as they know individual personal fates in their respective neighbourhoods. This can be shown by an example of a facility: *“So far, very few have come with [loneliness] as a topic, but from what they tell me, I know that many of them are otherwise alone.”* [ZGO04] However, whether these findings can be systematically recorded and passed on in the future is one of the crucial questions for the further development of the *NdW* and the accompanying research.

Similarly, state secretaries in the administration form a *“hinge between politics and administration and civil society.”* [VO4] A mediating role is also played by various

types of promoters, who are often described as change agents (cf. Kristoff 2017). Such promoters can legitimise new processes by virtue of their position, order them and recognise when cooperative or conflictive strategies are appropriate. So-called power promoters have leadership and decision-making competence and can provide (financial, human) resources. It is their task to initiate change processes and make success possible in the long term.

In the *NdW*, this role seems to be effective on the part of the administration, both in the preparation and the long-term implementation. Before the project started, power promoters have involved other intermediaries who in their respective fields of work can see how crises build up, e.g. social associations, churches, culture or neighbourhood centres and libraries, can provide early insight. In addition, promoters have provided adequate resources in unrehearsed ways during the course of the crisis, and provided clarity and certainty to other administrative actors in the resulting uncertainty (see Phenomenon I).

In the *NdW*, as is usual in complex crises, expertise is not possible individually, but arises in between, as a co-production of different actors (Perry and Atherton 2017) - i.e. collaboratively. Pilots, facilitators and promoters act as a decentralised store of knowledge. In this respect, the *NdW* resembles current approaches of governments, which follow an anticipatory logic. This logic is necessary for public administrations to fulfil their tasks despite uncertain data (Kimbell and Vesnić-Alujević 2020).



III. Cooperation

The cooperation in the *NdW* arises from different contributions of the stakeholders. The Senate Department is in the role of facilitator and process shaper. The district administrations can pass on the financial resources to sponsors. Karuna is in a facilitator and representative role, while the institutions implement the measures in addition to facilitating. The citizens are in the position of the beneficiary, but are not involved in the network as active designers. For the cooperation between the various stakeholders, the crisis team of the SenIAS should be mentioned separately, which is a decisive means of communication within the Senate and between the Senate and Karuna.

The most important aspect of the cooperation is the understanding that synergies are only possible together, which is reflected in very practical but essential aspects such as the PR measures of the *NdW* (1). Also very beneficial was the direct, regular exchange, which seemed to promote trust and motivation at various levels (2). Positive approaches with room for improvement seem to be the communication flows and the associated feedback culture (3). Cooperation with the districts seems to have been quite difficult, as was already emphasised at the narrative level (Phenomenon I) (4).

“Who can do what?”

“You basically create structures in the urban society [to] coordinate in a way that we never could, [because] we are simply not that close to it.” [V04]

The cooperation between the administration and civil society is important not only because of the different time structures but also because of the different ways of thinking and working: *“They have to think differently and act differently, [...] we as the administration cannot do that. That is why it is good to have this cooperation.”* [Interorganisational cooperation is characterised by the interlocking of complementary “tasks and competences” (Schütte et al. 2022, p. 88). Functioning crisis management is the result of the various possibilities that different stakeholders in the *NdW* bring to the table.

As a contact point for the institutions (see Pilot Phenomenon II), Karuna has also set up and maintained an interactive map. All facilities also received a kind of toolkit of PR materials. This was to ensure *“that the information is then posted accordingly on the net [...], that there is a recognisable logo as soon as possible, that people who have heard about it and walk past it see it.”* [V03] Advertising measures for the *NdW*, which would not have been possible in the short time available due to the bureaucratic procedures of the Senate, could be implemented quickly and unbureaucratically by Karuna with the financial support of the GLS Bank, as the Senate was not yet capable to do so: *“Putting up posters, flyers or other actions has not yet happened. [V03] Because they are “not tied to the administration, [...] they can have other ideas. You can see that especially with all the advertising measures, for example, our hands are often strictly tied as to what is possible and what is not possible.” [V01]*

The extensive materials distributed in the context of the *NdW* and the increased visibility seem to have a

lasting effect in terms of new volunteers or networking among each other. *“We don’t have anyone in our ranks who can market in any way [...] You can tell people, but how do we get to the people so that we become practically visible”* [ZGO06]. For example, institutions reported new staff members who stay on as volunteers after their paid time or cooperations between e.g. actors from the church environment and the labour force.

Short communication channels and trust

“As far as we had this jour fixe and saw each other regularly, it got better and better.” [VO2]

Establishing routines of communication seems to have had a direct influence on motivation in the NdW. *“So I think that also went from exhausting to very relaxed [...] because then we all realised that we are nice and we all have an intrinsic motivation. We all want to make it work.”* [VO2] Trust and short communication channels, as described here, were central to cooperation on several levels: (1) Cooperation between Karuna and the Senate became easier; (2) Karuna staff, who acted as intermediaries between the administration and the institutions, were able to get needs to the right place more quickly. (3) Direct contact and feedback between the administration and the institutions were important for compliant application and concrete implementation of the projects. (4) Positive examples from the network motivate administrative staff. (5) Lack of contact with the district authorities is frustrating because it is not clear why

some projects were not funded. These examples are briefly explained below.

Communication channels and feedback

“and sometimes it’s like a game of telephone.” [VO1]

The preceding quote shows that the flow of information within the Senate is a difficulty for quick processing. *“That has been, I think, the biggest problem [...] We always have the intermediary through our own budget, who has taken our needs and concerns or questions and then passed them on.”* [VO1] Although cooperation within the crisis team and the project was characterised by more flexible cooperation, cooperation with the normal hierarchical levels within the Senate is still difficult.

The flow of information between the administration and the institutions is difficult to describe in general terms due to the diversity and number of participating institutions, but feedback is important for the motivation and learning ability of all actors. Feedback from the administration to the institutions has a motivating effect: *“I always get good feedback from him and that also feels good, so I occasionally need my positive feedback from higher up and I get it from him.”* [ZGO04]

In the same way, feedback from institutions can increase the motivation of administrative staff. *“So it was always most pleasing when we sent things around internally, from thank-you letters, from the institution and what it is doing and you can see the results [...] what the whole project is for.”* [VO1]

On the other hand, institutions learn through feedback what can be promoted and what cannot. In the case of some district offices, there was no feedback on why applications were rejected, which was frustrating and prevented learning within the organisation.

The previously mentioned interpretation of the role can also make a difference. One applicant reported: *“The administration also likes to communicate by email [...] Sometimes it takes courage for me to simply call and ask how things should proceed. Sometimes the emails sound more nasty and worse than they really are.”* [ZGO04] This shows quite well what many people probably know: The tone makes the music. How, through which channels and with which address one communicates with each other entails certain behavioural regulations. If everyone is afraid of the office, then no one will come and get help, which can save the office a lot of work, but at the same time the directive and deterrent communication actively produces an impoverishment of the social sphere.

Cooperation with districts

“Every district is somehow structurally a bit different.” [V01]

In addition to the hierarchies within the Senate, cooperation with the districts was sometimes difficult. *“It was very complicated, because a large part of the money or the funds went out through the districts, or especially the things where people could apply for them.”* [V01] The exchange between the Senate and the districts was central

in that the applications were submitted separately to the districts. *“A lot of the meeting places are funded through the districts and the districts also know their actors better.”* [V03] In the end, there was one million euros per district and the Senate steering committee met about once a month to bring the participating institutions together, coordinate and clarify matters.

The difficulties in working with districts seem to be structural, political as well as role-specific. This is likely to have influenced the fact that the *NdW* was implemented more quickly in some districts and later or not at all in others. *“In some districts you could see that if the will was there, they started before the official letter came.”* [In addition, the district offices are unevenly equipped: *“There are offices in every district that are doing well. They have a lot of staff, they are promoted [...] and there are offices that are at the very bottom. Many positions are not filled, the equipment is poor, there is no conceptual work being done”* [V05]. Here too, economic inequality and social (in)justice make joint action difficult.

Cooperation with companies

Cooperation with businesses represents another important element within the network. In the “chaos phase”, in which the administration is not yet able to act and civil society steps in, there is a funding gap for civil society organisations. This is well expressed by the following quote from von Karuna: *“You also need funding just for that first moment”* [ZGO01]. This is where cooperation with businesses comes into play.

One form of cooperation that has proven itself through the experiment in the Network of Warmth was the cooperation with the *GLS Bank*: Karuna sends an approximate cost breakdown to the *GLS Dach Foundation*, which in turn provides this money before the Senate can commission certain institutions. The *GLS Bank* then tries to get this money as donations through its customers and members, but secures the sum itself if the donation target is not reached. This is a structure that could be made permanent for future crises. It would also be important for transparency if the administration could become part of the negotiation process in the future.

Apart from this, other companies have also participated with donations in kind and the provision of rooms, which has increased the effectiveness of the *NdW*. The companies are trying to make this cooperation more permanent, as they are also becoming aware of recurring crises and “*don’t want to start from scratch every time*” [ZGO01]. The institutionalisation of a crisis intervention structure increases the ability to act for future challenges.

Seeing more together

The *NdW* brings together actors from administration, civil society and business. In the case of the *NdW*, the first thing is the pragmatic realisation that each of the actors is only partially informed, especially in complex crisis situations, and thus uncertainties can be better dealt with by interweaving the respective expertise. This understanding

coincides with the existence of the previously described role of the pilot, i.e. the person who can pass on specific knowledge to the decision-making level on the spot and thus bring the simplified categories of bureaucracy closer to the real life world of those affected. This also includes learning from previous crises, knowing which actors there are and who can do what.

In this cooperation, however, the affected citizens themselves are missing. While the personal needs of those affected can be passed on upwards level by level through various mediators and a kind of feedback mechanism has actually emerged, it is nevertheless surprising how little these needs were recorded at the beginning of the project. This is certainly a missed opportunity and a possibility for further development, which is also reflected as a recommendation for action.

IV. Processes

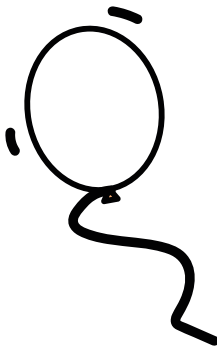
Finally, some procedural aspects that have affected the NdW have caught our eye. The most obvious problems are the late approval of funds, despite progress, and the different application forms used in different districts (1). Very interesting is the apparent systemic difficulty of tailoring programmes to needs while keeping administrative costs low (2). Finally, for the sake of completeness, the terms “grant notification” (3) and “basic correction” (4) are explained here, which describe elementary administrative procedures that are often incomprehensible to outsiders.

Application and approval period

“A common application form would be one of the things to mention as part of the evaluation for improvement.”
[V03]

which can be different in each district. These bureaucratic obstacles can only be shortened to a limited extent, and depend on the narratives (phenomenon I), the interpretation of the role (phenomenon II) and possibly political structures in the respective districts (phenomenon III), as the following examples also underline.

The planning of the NdW for a very limited period of time - originally all funds ran only until the end of March 2023 - met with incomprehension. Hiring staff, working out offers, creating synergies require time and planning security. Although the financial resources were later released for a longer period - this information became known in mid-February - applications were already run-



ning there and the offer of the *Network of Warmth* would have been needed long ago. Furthermore, it was only decided in mid-February that new people could also be employed. This meant that many institutions were only able to extend their services from mid-February. For some providers who are part of a large organisation, it is possible to go into advance financially, for others it would probably not be possible: *“If we were now, so to speak, detached on our own, we could not pre-finance it like that.”* [ZGO06]

Watering Can Principle vs. Tailored approach

“Because we actually all said we didn't want a watering can, but then realised that the more precisely you make it fit, the more expensive the administrative effort becomes.” [V05]

During the planning phase of the NdW, there was resistance to the project within the Senate: *“The [Senate] specialist level was not always so enthusiastic about it. [...] “The watering-can principle, of course, is somehow not great in itself and also a workload.”* [V01] Here, the NdW brings to light an interesting dilemma: in times of crisis, the administration must act decisively to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis. *“Because then you don't spend ages doing studies beforehand and thinking, what are we going to do now and so, but you have to act very quickly.”* [V02] However, the limited time frame for action, combined with procedural obstacles, has an impact on the design of a tailored package of measures.

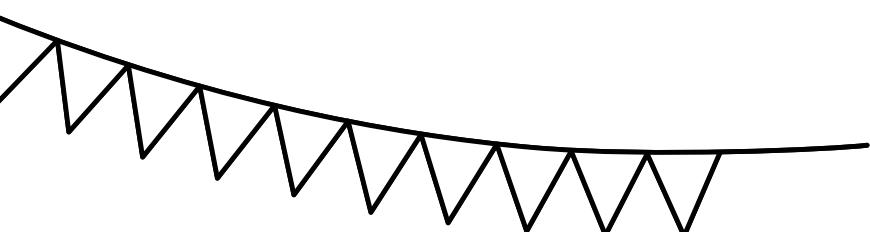
The less the principle of “watering cans” - meaning a

one-size-fits-all - is applied, the higher the requirements for verification and thus the administrative effort. If, for example, indigence is a prerequisite, proof is needed, e.g. a *WBS* entitlement certificate, and it must be checked in each individual case whether the person fulfils this or not. In case of doubt, this also means offering counselling, which in turn ties up administrative resources. This dilemma inherent in the system limits the ability to act, even though the actors agree that the money should reach the people as precisely and effectively as possible.

Grant notification

*“A grant notification is a written notification that the funding has been approved.”*¹⁰ In the case of the NdW, the majority of the money was spent through existing cooperations of providers, as they have developed a trusting cooperation and have local knowledge (see Phenomenon II): *“What contribution can you make to this? Which of you could go to such and such a cultural institution? Or can you still serve coffee and do social counselling in the library?”* [V05] In order to get paid for these services, he then submits a so-called grant application with the information about the offer, including the number of hours and the required staffing. The district can then see what the offer is, what the costs are and, based on previous experience, assess whether it is realistic and make adjustments if necessary. Finally, the provider receives the notification of funding, i.e. the certainty of being paid.

¹⁰ www.subventa.de/glossar/zuwendungsbescheid/
(last accessed: 25.05.23)



An overview of the financial scope, the funding agencies involved and the eligible beneficiaries who can be found in the following answer from the Berlin House of Representatives (printed matter 19 / 14 446):

Funding is mainly provided for supplementary services offered by existing facilities such as community centers, neighbourhood houses, social meeting places and self-help contact points within the framework of the Infrastructure Support Programme for Community Centers (IFP STZ) as well as suitable facilities in the area of the Integrated Social Programme (ISP). Eligible for funding are, for example, fees (group offers, changed opening hours especially at weekends, events, language mediation, counselling, expert input, additional cleaning costs, security staff if necessary) as well as, in justified individual cases, additional hours for permanent staff, project-related materials, purchases of supplies (e.g. fair share stations), expansion of existing kitchen utensils such as crockery, cutlery, kettles, cooking utensils, support for volunteers.

In the course of the basic correction, one million euros is available to each district. In addition, funds in the following amounts are available for this purpose: (1) Community Centers € 2,300,000 (2) Social meeting places (neighbourhood meetings) € 70,000 (3) Family centers € 833,000 (4) Self-help contact points (incl. branch offices) € 315,000 (5) AUS € 750,000 (6) Libraries € 1,160,000.

Basic correction

As already described, the funds were spent via two different procedures. In the case of the districts, the fastest possible mechanism was chosen, namely the basic correction route. This means that the districts are told that they can spend a certain amount of money on various measures. At the end of the year, when the accounts are settled, they have to say what they have spent and this is then reimbursed. *“The districts would have had to go another way, submitting each individual application and then being reimbursed, but that would have slowed down the process even more, which is why we said we would do the quick version.”* [V03] The basic correction exists to prevent potentially excessive deficits or surpluses and is announced by SenFIN in the course of the financial year..¹¹

¹¹ www.berlin.de/ba-treptow-koepenick/aktuelles/buergerbeteiligung/buergerhaushalt/artikel.969312.php
(last accessed: 25.05.23)

Recommendations for action

1. Crisis intervention and crisis infrastructure

One of the key findings of this report is that the *NdW* had two functions to fulfil. One is the “official” function, in which the network is a crisis management measure. The other is the implicit function: a way to build a crisis infrastructure. As crises have become the norm, both functions are essential for crisis management in the future. Since strengthening the crisis infrastructure was not an explicit goal of the network, this function was fulfilled as a “by-product”. However, an explicit focus on this could provide more necessary resources for infrastructure development (see also recommendation for action 3: Scientific monitoring).

For the future, it is important to understand what the limitations are for the administration in terms of building crisis infrastructure. If funds are allocated to deal with a current crisis, is it possible for the administration to use these funds to build infrastructure? What are obstacles? What is possible?

Recommendation for action:

For future crisis interventions, it is important to consider strengthening the crisis infrastructure as part of the intervention.

2. Further development of “KriSta”

Through the scientific monitoring of the *NdW* it became clear that intermediaries and guides are very important for the successful management of crises. These two roles are represented for the administration by the Senate’s crisis team and for the institutions by Karuna. This shows

that the crisis infrastructure for the administration is already institutionalised, whereas for civil society there is no institutionalised structure that can act as an intermediary in times of crisis.

Therefore, the establishment of the crisis network “KriSta” as a collective of Berlin’s civil society organisations is a logical and beneficial next step.¹²

In this way, the chaos phase can be coordinated in a more targeted manner after the outbreak of a crisis, as a crisis network does not have to be established first.

1. The diverse voices of various institutions in Berlin can be consolidated and presented as a unified front, rather than overwhelming the administration with the multitude of perspectives from the 400 participating institutions in the network.
2. Possible synergies can be found within *KriSta* and thus counteract the long-term overload and the struggle of individual institutions against the crisis as isolated parts.
3. Trust that has been built up through cooperation in the *NdW* can be further utilised and expanded.

Recommendation for action:

Focus the structure of *KriSta* on being an intermediary the concerns of the various civil society organisations in order to simplify the communication interface with the administration.

3. Scientific monitoring as a fixed component

The *NdW* has a funding volume of 25 million euros. The present work resulted from a time-limited (4-month) scientific monitoring in the scope of one full-time position. For this reason, many questions, especially in connection with the institutions, could not be answered conclusively. In order to anchor the knowledge gained from crises in practice, it is important that in future the scientific monitoring is a firmly integrated part of the crisis intervention and is carried out more extensively. In this way, reflexivity will be anchored in the process and constant learning and adaptation of processes will be achieved through feedback. This helps to understand “how organisations observe themselves, analyse the consequences of their actions and change their rules” (Moldaschl 2006, p. 4069).

Recommendation for action:

Scientific monitoring should be an integral part of crisis management interventions in order to improve learning from mistakes and to systematically reflect the processes from the outside and inside. Sufficient capacities for this purpose should be budgeted from the outset.

¹² www.krista.berlin (last accessed: 25.05.23)

4. Understanding the role of citizens and involving citizens

The role of citizens is best described by their absence in the design process of the *NdW* - they were mainly beneficiaries. Instead, they could be cooperation partners and co-creators, which is also confirmed by the institutions: *“People want to care about something, they want to feel responsible for something, not only for themselves, but for making it better somehow.”*

Recommendation for action:

The future design of crisis interventions should take into account that affected citizens are more than just petitioners. This requires a better understanding of how citizens can be involved in the crisis management process. One format for grassroots participation and empowerment of citizens is the democracy café. Based on the needs of a local population, it opens up room for manoeuvre for local people in as many places and institutions of the *NdW* as possible without being paternalistic:
www.demokratiecafe.de.

5. Building trust

The *NdW* thrives on the fact that various institutions and actors have come together to help those affected in a crisis on the basis of trusting cooperation. The trust that develops in the process is an important resource that will continue to serve good cooperation

in the future. Trust has to grow and it can be destroyed quickly. That is why it is important to deal with each other with care and goodwill and to allow others to make good decisions. While some level of control may seem necessary, trust should be the guiding principle. This fosters a collaborative network where everyone can rely on each other.

Recommendation for action:

Trust in each other should be cultivated in the *NdW*, and citizens with a trust bias should also be included in the processes of crisis management. Conversely, the citizens' trust in the institutions will grow and the fear of change can be reduced.

Crisis glossary

A to Z of the district budget

Accompanying research

Social-scientific monitoring of a process to record and reflect on the different perspectives, points of view, working methods and attitudes of the actors and organisations involved. Accompanying research leads to more reflexivity in the process, helps to clarify errors and inhibitions and to improve organisational learning (→**Institutional reflexivity**). In the end, this also saves an enormous amount of money, as processes and structures are systematically recorded and not everything has to be built up again and again or mistakes have to be repeated.

Chaos phase

The first two to four weeks at the beginning of a (new) crisis. During this phase, civil society actors mobilise in a self-organised way to put out the first fire and absorb the worst hardships for those affected by the crisis. During this time, state organisations are still sorting themselves out and cannot react appropriately to the situation because institutions are too sluggish. This phase is chaotic in the sense that there is a state of emergency here that breaks into the ongoing political one.

Error culture

The prerequisite for doing something better or differently is reflection and admitting mistakes. A lot can be learned from dealing constructively with mistakes. A culture of fear and error avoidance leads to decisive side effects being swept under the carpet. These nevertheless continue to have an effect and make it enor-

mously difficult to solve problems. An honest approach and reflexivity in the processes.

Bridging funding gaps

When a crisis hits and people are in need, immediate help is required. Government institutions can be too slow, especially during the →**chaos phase**. To bridge the time until public funds are available to cushion a crisis, fast money is needed. In the *NdW*, *GLS Bank* has taken on the function of advancing money so that the network can become operational quickly.

Watering can principle

Even distribution of funding and aid without checking for acute need. The advantage: It is quick and funds can be widely distributed. The disadvantage: it is imprecise, can miss those addressed and favour the unaffected. In a climate of → **trust**, the watering can principle can be an effective means of reaching the right place both quickly and in a targeted manner. The → **pilot** can be helpful in this.

Ability to act

Fast and precise reaction of a collaborative network to challenges. The ability to act does not mean the individual, but to act in → **collaboration** in a coordinated manner and to give the individual actors the necessary degree of freedom to complete a task in a self-determined manner. The stronger the → **trust** within an acting group, the more agile and greater the joint ability to act.

Institutional reflexivity

Reflexivity requires self-observation and self-criticism (→ **error culture**). For organisations, learning from mistakes means a high degree of permanent structures to allow themselves to be reflected from inside and outside and to draw consequences from this. In order to allow oneself to be reflected, there needs to be a → **willingness** to change and vice versa, this leads to an increased degree of reflexivity within the institution and to less fear on the part of the employees.

Collaboration

Principle of cooperative working together in order to better solve problems in a familiar relationship with each other. As many perspectives as possible are included and coordinated. In this way, solutions become more realistic and are supported by a larger number of actors. Acting in decentralised networks increases resilience to crises and improves the → **ability** to act

Contingency

can always go differently. The world as it is and how organisations act in it is collectively produced and changeable. But it is always dependent on the paths taken (→ **path dependency**). With great effort, new paths can also be taken and thus other paths laid that lead to a different world.

Crisis team

Cross-divisional crisis intervention unit that regularly coordinates and responds to complex problems as a

collaborative network (→ **Collaboration**). The crisis team is the strategic-operational advisory and decision-making unit that coordinates planned interventions and measures and distributes the assignments.

Guide

Interface or intermediary between institutions, administrations and citizens. The guide knows his way around the official jungle as well as the grassroots and is regarded as a person of trust and contact in all directions (→ **Trust**). On sometimes uncharted waters, with the help of shortcuts, the guide links different actors and builds bridges.

Power promoter

Can legitimise new processes through their position in the senate or administration. They have leadership and decision-making authority and can provide financial and human resources. It depends largely on them whether a process can be set in motion quickly or stalls. In these “power centres”, the → **error culture** is crucial, because where the responsibility is greatest, the tendency to avoid errors is also very likely.

Path dependency

Organisational routines and rituals that lead to stagnation when it is necessary to act “in other ways”. The dependence on a historically chosen path dominates and limits the options for action in the face of new situations. The wrong means are used to respond. What was once a solution becomes a problem.

Social figure

Spanning several social domains and structuring the social world. As a relatively free-floating actor, the → **pilot** as a social figure can mediate between different logics, claims and procedures and thus create extraordinary networks. A social figure provides visibility. A world of its own can emerge around it.

Stacking crisis

An existential crisis that overlays on a pre-existing ongoing crisis, without resolving the previous one. Earlier crises may fade into the background but continue to impact. When a crisis is no longer acute, the old ones resurface, and new ones pile on top. This creates a shared experience horizon of crises that becomes the norm.

Willingness to change

The environment of an institution or person is constantly changing. Often, objective as well as mental structures react to changing environmental conditions by rejecting or repressing challenges. They are resistant to experience. Willingness to change is the attitude of allowing self-observation and self-criticism and admitting mistakes and learning from them (→ **error culture**). With → **institutionalised reflexivity**, for example through → **accompanying research**, the unlikely case of a willingness to change also increases.

Trust

As a precious commodity of good cooperation (→ **collaboration**) the prerequisite for quick and precise crisis

intervention. It is based on already successful exchange, cultivated relationships, must grow and is very fragile. Only with mutual trust can surprises be reacted to and as many actors as possible be included.

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c/o nextlearning e.V.
Dresdener Str. 119
10999 Berlin

Dr. Philip Hector
Blasius Walch
ph@politicsfortomorrow.de

Head of research:
Dr. Robert Jende

Art Direction:
Florian Seidel

On behalf of the State of Berlin +
KARUNA eG the social cooperative with a sense of family
Moorsdorfstr. 7-9
12435 Berlin

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How can we work well together to remain capable of acting in crises?

This report deals with the question of how the interaction between administration and civil society functions in crisis situations, how cooperation can succeed and what lessons can be learned from the *Network of Warmth* for future crises. The authors argue for reflective and reflexive change processes that transparently incorporate their own effects and learn from mistakes.

“The Network of Warmth is an important example of how systemic thinking and action is essential in the crises of our time”

(Franziska Gaupp, Environmental Scientist)



NETZWERK
der WÄRME

