

Msc thesis

# Practising Agency in Changing Structures

*Exploring the agency of bottom-up initiatives in the  
development of two Dutch regions*



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## Abstract

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This Msc thesis analyses two Dutch regions in the Netherlands (de Kempen and het Vechtdal) in a changing political, societal and economical context. It looks into the constraining and enabling factors of four bottom-up initiatives in regions to express agency to develop the region in the way that they prefer. I have made use of the rural web as an analytical tool, which looks at endogeneity, novelty, sustainability, social capital, new institutional arrangements and market governance as dimensions in which agency can be expressed. The data for this thesis came from the available literature as well as from interviews with key actors in the development of the regions and in the initiatives. The main conclusions are that agency is expressed mainly by practices. Depending on the type of initiative these practices can be seen as a) a defence of the local, b) as an alternative to the (global) structures surrounding the initiative and for all initiatives in general, agency could be seen as changing the relationships between the initiative and its structural environment. This thesis furthermore shows the importance of motivation, vision, social capital and leadership as the basis of agency to develop. Other more structural factors, such as the institutional arrangements and cultural schemas are also identified as preconditions for bottom-up initiatives to show agency.

## Samenvatting

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Deze Msc scriptie analyseert twee Nederlandse regio's (de Kempen en het Vechtdal) in een veranderende context van de politiek, samenleving en economie. Het kijkt naar de factoren die mogelijkheden dan wel belemmeringen oproepen voor vier bottom-up initiatieven om hun regio's te ontwikkelen op de manier dat zij dat willen. Deze thesis maakt gebruik van het "rurale web", dat kijkt naar endogeniteit, innovatie, duurzaamheid, sociaal kapitaal, nieuwe institutionele arrangementen en de markt als zijnde dimensies waarin agency geuit kan worden. De input voor deze thesis komt van al aanwezige literatuur en uit interviews met sleutelpersonen in de ontwikkeling van deze regio's en van de initiatieven. De belangrijkste conclusie is dat agency geuit wordt in praktijken. Afhankelijk van het type initiatief kunnen deze praktijken gezien worden als het beschermen van het lokale, als een alternatief voor de (globale) structuren die het initiatief omgeven en voor alle initiatieven kan deze agency gezien worden als het veranderen van de relaties van het initiatief met zijn omgeving. Daarnaast laat deze scriptie ook zien dat motivatie, visie, sociaal kapitaal en leiderschap de basis vormen voor agency. Andere factoren zoals institutionele arrangementen en culturele schema's worden ook aangegeven als belangrijke omgevingsfactoren om agency te kunnen uiten.



## 1. Introduction

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In the European countryside, including the Dutch countryside, changes are occurring. The context is currently changing and this can bring about opportunities as well as constraints for places and in particular for regions. In this thesis I would like to explore the development of regions in the Netherlands and see in which way these regions can use the changing opportunity structure in their interest. In this first chapter I will come to a problem statement and formulate my main research questions and sub questions that will help me answer this main question. Following this chapter I will explain the theoretical framework and methodology in chapter two and three. Further I will describe the results and analyse these results in chapters five to ten. In chapter eleven, I will compare the cases and I will finalize with a conclusion and a recommendation.

### 1.1 Context

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#### 1.1.1 European Structural Funds

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The development that has given rise to this thesis is the changes that are going to take place in the European funding structure, which will be organized differently from 2014 onwards. Based on the experiences of LEADER projects, a new approach, Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is developed as a funding tool for sub-national territories to mobilise and involve local communities and organisations and to contribute to

*"..achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives."* (European Commission 2011)

The main aims of the new CLLD approach are to:

- encourage local communities to develop integrated **bottom-up approaches** in circumstances where there is a need to respond to territorial and local challenges calling for structural change;
- build **community capacity** and stimulate **innovation** (including social innovation), **entrepreneurship** and **capacity for change** by encouraging the development and discovery of untapped **potential** from within communities and territories;
- promote **community ownership** by increasing **participation** within communities and build the sense of **involvement and ownership** that can increase the effectiveness of EU policies; and
- assist **multi-level governance** by providing a route for local communities to fully take part in shaping the implementation of EU objectives in all areas.

(European Commission 2011)

This new way of structuring funds from the EU level to the regions and the emphasis it places on bottom-up initiatives, community capacity, participation and governance, opens up questions for research. In Europe regions have developed along different development paths. In the ETUDE-project, analysed by van der van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008) performances of regions have been studied and it seems that there is not one right way of developing regions, but many different experiences. What is particularly interesting in these diverging experiences is what role this new approach and focus on CLLD can have on the capacity of the people and the institutions in these regions to act towards regional development.

#### 1.1.2 Changing role of the nation state

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An important feature of the current organization of society and a development that must be seen in combination with the changing European funding structure is the changing role of the nation state. Jessop (1997) has identified three trends that signify this changing role of nation states and that lead to a “hollowing out” of the nation state. The first is a denationalization of the state. This can be identified in the movement of capacities from the national government upwards, towards sub national or international institutions (EU, NAFTA) or downwards towards local, regional or translocal bodies. A second trend is the shift from government to governance, in which the central role of national government bodies changes towards a bigger role for partnerships between governmental and non-governmental organizations. Although these partnerships seem to gain in importance, Jessop also mentions that the state has on the other hand increased its role in meta-governance. The different levels of government still play a very central role in this governance form. The government may change its role, but will not completely disappear in this kind of governance. A third trend can be seen as states are more dependent of the international regime. This can be seen in the role that neoliberalism and international competitiveness plays in domestic policy and also how the domestic state internalizes constraints coming from international institutions and organizations.

These three trends do not necessarily see a declining role of the nation state, but at least a changing role due to local, regional, national and supranational developments. Jessop mainly sees a central role for national governments in meta-governance, in coordinating and bringing together different forms of governance (Jessop 1997).

### 1.1.3 Regionalization

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Following Jessop (1997) the role of regional governance can be seen as increasingly important as nation states move responsibilities more towards regional bodies. Jones et al. (2005) have looked at this process of a changing nation state in the UK and sees this hollowing out of the nation state in combination with the filling in of sub national institutions and organizations. They propose that by looking at recent developments as a combination of hollowing out of the nation state and a replacement of these spaces by sub national bodies, the different power dynamics become more clear and this process of devolution can be seen as both a development from the top down (states delegating power to lower level authorities) or from the bottom up (localities or regions making use of the room that the changing central government leaves behind).

This focus on regions is also mentioned by Keating (1997) who describes how from the beginning of the 1980s a crisis of territorial scale occurred throughout Europe. A new wave of increasing importance of the region developed, this time influenced by external forces (the European Union and the global market). Wiskerke (2007) mentions this resurgence of the regional approach accounting to four factors. First of all, the weakened position of the nation state as we have already seen in the work of Jessop. Secondly, the region becomes an important factor in identity building of the people living in it and can create on the one hand a sense of belonging and on the other also a sense of place. Thirdly, the region can become a scale in which sustainability issues can be tackled. And finally, the region can become an important site for knowledge development and innovation processes. These four factors all point to the importance that regions can play in research and practice.

This new interest in the region as territorial space is also evident in the Netherlands. Although in a less evident manner than in other countries in the European Union, having a more central state with much emphasis placed on municipalities, the Netherlands are also experiencing a reinvention of the region Keating (1997). From the 1990s, the Dutch national government has stimulated the control of some regional issues to lower level authorities, which was called Gebiedsgericht beleid (region-oriented policy). This policy was aimed at creating a style of network governance in which the government takes the initiative. While in the first days of this new orientation, the focus was primarily on solving problems on specific regional issues, in the new regional policy, almost all regions were covered and the region is gaining importance as an authority. Different forms of regional governance have been developed from the 1990s, such as “ROM-areas” (ROM gebieden) that are meant to integrate spatial and environmental policy or “Valuable Cultural landscapes”

(Waardevolle Cultuurlandschappen) that sought to maintain the qualities of valuable agricultural regions as well as profiting economically. (Hajer et al. 2004; L. G. Horlings 2010). Next to these regional governance structures, there are some governance structures occurring more from the region itself, instead of being administratively developed, which can be called self-governance. In the Netherlands these types can be on the one hand characterized by development of voluntary instruments between private and public actors and on the other hand a focus on “changing the rules of the game”, where flexible policy solutions are developed. Examples of these self-governing groups are agri-environmental associations (Agrarische Natuurverenigingen) which consists of farmers and citizens working together on issues of the environment, nature and landscape conservation (L. G. Horlings 2010). These more self-organizing initiatives will also be the focus point in this thesis.

#### 1.1.4 Citizen involvement in the Netherlands

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Another important contextual factor in the Dutch regional landscape is the increased citizen involvement. Civic participation in the Netherlands has for a long time been clustered around religious or ideological beliefs. In the 60s of the previous century this ordering of society started to change and people started to organize in other structures. The gap that was left behind in this change called for more participation for the people. During the 80s these developments continued, making the Netherlands a typical “NGO-country”, with the highest number of benefactors and supporters in the world. In the 90s participation was again gaining popularity, but now participation of citizens was seen to be most effectively succeeded on the local level. From the 2000s civic participation mainly developed towards spontaneous initiatives of many individuals coming together. These initiatives were mainly without government interference. This development was combined with a new policy approach from the government in which the responsibilities of citizens was stressed. Although new policy has been developed since then, the focus in national policy is still on the ability of citizens to organize themselves (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid 2012). Also in the latest document by the Dutch ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations this do-democracy is emphasized. (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties 2013)

In this research I will focus primarily on the sub-provincial scale, on the regional level. Due to the changing role of the nation state, the increased importance of the region, as well as the increased citizen involvement, the region is one of the levels where opportunities arise. Next to this, there seems to be an “administrative gap” on the regional level. Many scales of government are involved at the regional level, but none of these seem to have decision making power, which hampers effective decision making power on the regional level (van der Brink et al. 2006).

#### 1.2 Problem statement

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In light of the upcoming changes in the European Cohesion Policy, the devolution of the nation state combined with the continuing importance of regional governance and increased citizen involvement, opportunities can be witnessed for regions to develop to their full potential. These circumstances in the global and the national environment create an opening for citizens in regions to take more control of their development and be more involved in this development process. From these contextual factors it seems that opportunities arise for regions to develop. Therefore the problem statement is:

*“Because of changing legislation in the European Cohesion funds, a changing role of the national governments and increased citizen involvement, people and institutions in regions in the Netherlands seem to have increased their opportunities to shape their development. In light of these circumstances, the opportunities that arise from this changed context could benefit the people and institutions in these regions. Gaining insight in these opportunities would make them more capable to act, which can help them shape their futures.”*

### 1.3 Research questions

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From the developments I have described, it is important to see spaces and in this case the people and the institutions of these regions as potential sites of agency. The regions themselves do not own agency, but it is in the citizens living in the regions that agency can be found, as will be further elaborated upon the theoretical framework. From the problem statement and the objectives set previously, my preliminary research question is:

*“In which way do bottom-up initiatives express agency in order to develop their regions in their preferred way?”*

Questions that can be used to answer this big question are:

- How did the region develop until now and what are different visions for the future development of the region?
- Which actors and/or institutions are involved in the development of the region?
- How is agency expressed by bottom-up initiatives in het Vechtdal?
- How is agency expressed by bottom-up initiatives in De Kempen?
- What are constraining and enabling factors for agency in these two regions?
- What role can government and policy play now and in the future?

The first question will give an overview of the development paths of the two regions. This is important to get a general picture of the areas. The second question identifies the relevant actors and institutions in the field. The next two questions focus on the ways in which agency is expressed in the two regions. In these chapters I will answer the next question, which is the most important one, as it gives most input to answer the main research question. The last question looks primarily at the role of governments and the policy they develop. Before I can proceed to the theoretical framework, it is important to have a clear vision on the concepts agency and region, as mentioned in the research question.

Regions are defined in this thesis as areas consisting of more than one municipality and smaller than a Dutch province. There is generally not much effective decision-making power from the government perspective, which is also referred to as an administrative gap. The concept of agency that I would like to analyse and that best suits the cases, is the concept of community agency. This concept has been used among others by Brennan and Luloff (2007). They define community agency and corresponding development as:

*“the process of building relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite and act (p.54).*

This definition emphasizes the relational aspect of agency which will be explained in the theoretical framework.

In this approach, resources remain central, however the focus is also on the relationships and links between these resources and the people and institutions. When people have more control over these relationships and linkages, the capacity to unite and act increases. Agency is created through interaction in these relationships, the identification of common needs that increase the social well-being, which increases the quality of life.

The knowledge of the presence or absence of this capacity to shape the region can help regions to improve their development process. Knowing where agency is situated and how this can be stimulated, can help initiatives in these regions in their development. Only when these initiatives are

able to look at the agency available, it can work from this agency and build on it to increase the capacity for change. When looking at it from a government perspective, initiatives that are aware of their capacities could more easily be given the freedom to take care of things using these capacities. When initiatives show their self-organizing capacity, the government might as well feel more assured handing over tasks and responsibility. In this way the answers to these questions can help initiatives become more aware of their inner strength and endogenous potential to increase control over their region and let external influences (policy, subsidies, globalization, the market) not take over or at least, not steer the development of the region. For governments and policy makers, the acknowledgement of this agency of bottom-up initiatives can lead to a different relationship between society and the government; instead of executing and setting the rules, policy makers can take a more facilitating role towards local initiatives.



## 2. Theoretical framework

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### 2.1 Neo-endogenous development

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Looking at theories of regional development, (neo)endogenous development is a term which has been used widely in rural development theory and suits this research as well. It studies processes of development in which the endogeneity of the place is emphasized. The endogenous part refers to the bottom-up trajectory of development, where resources and mechanisms for development focus on the local, territorial level. Oostindie et al. (2008) have defined endogeneity of rural economies as consisting of three factors. The first is whether this economy is built on **local resources**. The second is whether the economy is organized according to local models, which also imply **local control** over the resources. The third condition of endogeneity is whether the economy itself is strengthened by the produced wealth in this locality or region, which leads to **locally added value**. Endogenous development in this view implies that development is at least partly initiated and controlled by local society.

When we look again at the term neo-endogenous development, the “neo” part refers to the extra local factors that also have to be taken into account. As Ray (2006) has mentioned:

*“Neo-endogenous development retains a bottom-up core in that local territories and actors are understood as having the potential for (mediated) agency, yet understands that extra local actors, inevitably and crucially impact on - and or exploitable by - the local level. (p.278)*

In his view Ray highlights the bottom-up approach, but also sees that this kind of development does not operate in isolation and that forces outside the locality must also be taken into account. Oostindie et al. (2008) think that those external factors are indeed of importance, and moreover that one has to be careful not to minimize external influences in order to increase endogeneity.

*“External factors do not determine the “optimal solution” but can be read, translated and transformed in a way that strengthens locally specific development and local control.” (p.55)*

The locality can thus also be strengthened and become relatively more autonomous by making use of external forces instead of staying away from these. I think this concept of endogeneity in which the connection between the local and the global is crucial is also important when looking at regions in the Netherlands. The notion of neo-endogenous development can be seen as the theoretical content which on the one hand respects the strengths of the region itself while on the other hand does not neglect the influence that the wider context can have and shows that the wider context can even be used in order to strengthen the locality.

### 2.2 Place-based development

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From the theory of endogenous development in rural sociology, connections can be seen to another research tradition, the study of place. Gieryn (2000) has noted the importance of studying place in sociological phenomenon. He thinks in all facets of sociology, place should be taken into account, because in all facets of sociology, place does play a role. He identifies three core features of place that fit in a vision for the study of place. The first being geographic location, which refers to place as *“a unique spot in the universe”* (p. 464). Secondly he highlights the material form through which place is constructed. Buildings, sidewalks and trees are all material forms which together make place. The last characteristic is that place is invested with meaning and value. Places are constructed by representation, identification and naming of people. These three features make place important in all facets of sociology.

A well-known author in the relational reading of place is Doreen Massey. In her book on globalization and places (1994) she sees the world as a connected by social and material relations. Place can be seen as meeting points between relations, connections and communications across the world. There is no single place identity, but places have multiple identities and multiple relations. The city of Amsterdam has for example a different identity for an international student than it has for an illegal immigrant, while they both live in the same place. Places are also not physically bounded, because the relationships that “make” a place can stretch far beyond that place. The harbour of Rotterdam is defined as economically prosperous, because of the relationships with the rest of the world. In order to look at Rotterdam relationally must look beyond the physical boundary of the city of Rotterdam. This relational reading sees places as processes and not as static localities, which inherit their identity from their internalized history. It does not mean however that places are not unique. Globalization has different impact on different localities and the relationships between a place and the outer world is not the same everywhere. This emphasizes that places are not all victims of globalization. Places change due to the relationships they have with the outer world. It is in the context of the rest of the world that places become places and agency can be performed (Massey 1994). This making of the region is also sometimes referred to as place-based development, defined by Healey (2004) as

*“self-conscious collective efforts to re-imagine a city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation. (p.46)*

Healey also sees place-based development no longer as linear, directed or predictable, but as non-linear, complex and continually emergent, popping up in unexpected ways from a variety of actors. This notion connects to the place that Massey (2004) talks about. She does not see places victims of globalisation (of the local-global relation) but places of negotiation and power struggles and potential sites of owing agency through influencing these relationships.

Another characteristic, which is also underwritten by Gieryn, but is relevant to further emphasize is to see places as social constructs, which are endowed with meaning and do not have pre-given characteristics. This social constructivism links places with identities, because this meaningfulness of places gives the people their identity. This connects with the view that Paasi (2010) has developed. He looks at regions, and sees them first and foremost as social constructs. The region has meaning through the process and roles of actors and social relations in these regions. Many actors and processes are involved in this “making” of the region (by actors living in the region), but also outside the region (by national discourses, marketing campaigns, globalization etc.). All these actors influence the “making of the region, which makes the concept of agency rather complex and involving a multitude of actors. Also scholars actively construct the region, when trying to conceptualize the region to make it empirically “measurable”. The making of the region can in this sense be intentional by activists defending the regional boundaries, but also unintentional by processes that are not specifically aimed at the region. The growing preference for quiet living spaces for the elderly and tourists has made many rural regions into consumption spaces, which are not per se intended for by this region, but merely an unintended development. Paasi also relates the making of the region to issues of power and continues to say that regions can become established parts of a wider system with the ability to reproduce itself. This ability or capacity of regions can be understood as

*“a complex set of practices, discourses, and competences related to social positions, expectations, motivations and advantages that will emerge during the institutionalization process.” (p. 2300)*

Agency in regions, according to Paasi thus focuses on the practices, discourses and competences that can be found with the actors, institutions and social relations in this region, that are related to social positions, expectations, motivations and advantages.

This seems as a promising future for regions and seems to question the power dynamics at play in these places. Amin (2004) however questions the ability of regions to affect the deeper grounded power relations in regions. He notices on the one hand an increase in the interest for regions from a very territorial perspective, but on the other hand also sees a more globalized, relational context of this region and questions the ability of regions to benefit from this changed context. In a more globalizing world with more interdependencies:

*“cities and regions possess a distinctive spatiality as agglomerations of heterogeneity locked into a multitude of relational networks of varying geographical reach”* (Amin 2004, p. 42-43).

He stresses the importance of exercising nodal powers and aligning networks at large in the interest of the region, instead of increasing territorial power. The question that remains interesting is to see in which way the actors in these regions are capable to act, to show agency in this more interrelated world?

### **Relational versus territorial approach**

Jonas (2012) has looked at the different ways of researching regions, the relational as well as the territorial notion. He mentions that the flaws of the more relational notion of place is the emphasis that is placed on the relationships between the global and the local, while the relationships inside the region are often not much analysed. He argues that

*“questions of territory and territorial politics must remain salient in regional development theory.”*(p.6)

Jonas therefore favours research on regions to be done in both traditions; looking at relationships in the region, beyond the region and also looking at the power dynamics at play inside the region. This approach would as well suit this research on Dutch regions. The internal process of the region is the starting point from which I think agency is performed, but is also influenced and made possible by the relationships within and beyond this region.

In this thesis I will look at local initiatives in two Dutch regions. The choice for studying these regions already implies a choice for a more territorial notion of place. I have chosen to focus on regions, because I think that people and institutions in regions, who are the potential owners of agency, and therefore the object of study, also perform this agency in the context of this region. Regional initiatives that start in these regions make use the identity of their region to give meaning to their initiative. Local initiatives on food, for example, focus specifically on the regional identity in order to market these regional products. They construct boundaries in order to develop their initiative. Next to this, the development that has given rise to this research is the changing funding structure of the European Cohesion funds. This is also a territorial approach to stimulating development, starting from geographical bounded regions, which will also stimulate agency in this bounded region. In short, I expect regions to still be organized more territorial oriented, intentional (through making use of the region as an identity) or unintentional (by external funding opportunities). A territorial approach would therefore be the best way to look at agency in these places.

In spite of the fact that I have chosen this territorial approach, I would like to use certain elements of the relational approach in order to understand development in the regions. Regions are places that have a potential capacity to exercise nodal powers and to align networks in the interest of the region as Amin (2004) has emphasized. In the context of the Netherlands, where an administrative gap seems to have developed on this regional scale, the use of these relational and networking skills could be crucial in expressing agency. Therefore I think it is crucial to focus on the relationships in this region. Although the focus is primarily on the relationships inside the region, this research will show that relationships cannot be captured in territorial boundaries, which makes it

difficult to use the territorial as well as the relational approach in one thesis. I will come back to this dilemma in the concluding chapters.

## 2.3 Structuration theory

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A concept which has been used in sociology for some time and is useful in studying the capacity of regions is agency. An important author in the development of the concept of agency is Giddens. In his structuration theory he defines structures as dual; they are as well the medium towards people's practices as the result of people's practices. Or in other words, people structure society, but are also influenced by these structures. Instead of being constrained by the structures in our society, we ourselves can structure society in our everyday lives. Human agents are capable of using their structurally formed capacities in order to change the structures in society. In this way structure and agency must be seen as a process and not as a steady state. This also explains the emphasis on structuration instead of structure in the theory (Giddens and Sutton 2009).

### 2.3.1 Agency

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Although Giddens is most known for its theory on structures and practices, he does not provide a clear understanding of what he exactly means with agency. (Sewell 1992) does establish a more specific notion of the concept. He begins with the definition that

*“to be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree”* (p. 20).

In this definition relationships become central which relates to seeing place as meeting points of relationships in the relational notion of place. Furthermore this definition also mentions control over social relations and the capability to transform relationships. An actor is thus seen as capable to change the current situation by exerting control over his social relationships. He further explains what is meant with this control by connecting agency with structure as was done by Giddens as well. Agency is hereby defined primarily in connection to structures. In order to clarify this, it is important to find out what is meant with structures, because Giddens and Sewell differ in their interpretation of these concepts.

### 2.3.2 Structure

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While Giddens sees structure as consisting of resources and rules, both having a virtual character, Sewell prefers to speak of resources and schemas, which allows a differentiation between virtual and actual structures. Rules in the way that Giddens has used it refer too much to codified formal prescriptions, according to Sewell, while he prefers to speak of schemas which refer more to the informal schemas, metaphors and assumptions that can develop into more codified rules. This distinction allows Sewell to differentiate between the more virtual structures, referred to as schemas and more actual properties referred to as resources. Rules, when codified have a more actual character and therefore can be seen as actual resources. Schemas on the other hand can be seen as generalizable, which means that they can be applied to many different contexts when the opportunity arises. Hays (1994) has defined schemas as

*“patterns of principles that guide human thought and action* (p. 66).

Examples of schemas are notions of the human being, etiquette rules, aesthetic norms etc. The virtual character of these schemas refer to the fact that their use is not limited to the place and time were the schema was first developed or used, but generalizable to other moments and places (Sewell 1992).

A too narrow focus on these rules and schemas would not pay attention to power differences that influence people's practices. Therefore resources are also important when looking at agency, because this concept looks more at power dynamics. Resources can have a human character (for example knowledge and physical strength) as well as a non-human character (for example land or property) and can be used in order to enhance or maintain power. When we put structure and agency back together, actors have access to some form of human and non-human resources and also have knowledge of the schemas that inform social life. The knowledge that people have of schemas means that the actor is able to apply the schemas to new contexts. On the other hand, there are also resources which make people with more resources better able to act. Agents are therefore enabled or constrained by structures in two ways. On the one hand the knowledge of the schemas can enable them to mobilize resources and on the other hand, the access to resources enables the agent to make use of schemas. Or how Sewell has said it:

*“agency arises from the actor's control of resources, which means the capacity to reinterpret or mobilize an array of resources in terms of schemas other than those that constituted the array”(p.20).*

This supposes again a capability to change the current situation of the agent by controlling the resources on the one hand and on the other hand by having knowledge of the schemas in order to be able to apply them in new contexts. Structure in the form of resources and schemas determine agency and agency determines the structures as seen in the structuration theory (Sewell 1992).

According to Sewell all people have some generalizable form of agency. He compares the capacity for agency with the capacity to use language. While all humans have the capacity to learn a language, the capacity of some people to become competent speakers is not realistic for everyone. The social milieu or structure of the actor influences the ability to become a competent speaker of a certain language. This however does not mean that the capacity is not there; every actor has the capacity to learn a language as it has the capacity for agency, although in different forms. Structure thus empowers agents differentially and the actions of agents on the other hand also impact the structure differentially and agency is therefore also very much about power (Sewell 1992).

### 2.3.3 Structure and agency

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After this more extensive description of structure and agency, the determinants of agency seem to lie very much in the structure surrounding the agent. So when agency has to be identified, automatically one also has to look at these structural elements and resources in order to find where this agency comes from. Therefore in order to find the prerequisites to agency, these structural elements should also be taken into account. But an overemphasis on these structural elements would wrongly suggest that actors and their actions can be predicted if all information of this agent is available.

#### **Four properties of agency**

Dietz and Burns (1992) would like to bring forward that not all human agency can be predicted by structural elements and assigns four criteria that must be met in order to attribute an agent with agency. The first emphasizes the issue of power. An agent must be capable of effectively influencing the rules of a given culture in order to be agentic, be it in a more direct way (by influencing directly on the rules) or indirectly (by influencing discourse). This first property is mostly about the power of the agent to effectively make a change. The second attribute emphasizes that the agent must have intended to take the action, instead of action being a result of chance or subconscious action. The third attribute emphasizes the choice of the agent. There must have been other options open for the agent which makes the choice that is made, a conscious decision instead of a coincidence. The last attribute emphasizes the reflexivity of the agent, which allows the agent to monitor its actions and if necessary change the course of action. These four attribute together form the capacity for agency,

although these authors think all humans possess some level of agency, the amount of each individual depends on these four elements.

Bandura (2006) has also mentioned four somewhat overlapping core properties of human agency, which can be applied not only to individual, but also to collectives. The first property refers to the intentionality of the agent(s). In a collective sense, this property looks into the plans and strategies of the group to make their shared intentions reality. Commitment to these intentions and coordination of the interdependent plans of action are crucial in this property. The second property is about forethought and goes a step further than the former property in the form of visualized futures for the group. Goals and anticipated outcomes can provide direction and guidance for the collective. The third property is self-reactiveness and refers to the link that has to be made between thought and action. After vision, strategy, and plans of action are made, the practice is the next step in showing agency. The last property concerns self-reflectiveness in which the agent(s) monitor their own action. Bandura mentions this self-reflection as the most distinct property of human agency. For collective agency Bandura emphasizes that:

*“people’s conjoint belief in their collective capability to achieve given attainments is a key ingredient” (p.165)*

Bandura agrees with Giddens that structures and agency presuppose each other, and therefore that structures can be influenced by agentic individuals and groups. The four properties, motivation, plans, practices and monitoring influence the structures surrounding the agent and thereby influence its agency. These properties strongly overlap with the properties seen by Dietz and Burns (1992) except that these authors have included power to achieve goals as a property of agency. In the framework by Sewell and Giddens this power dimension is mostly captured in the concept of resources; the differential access to resources influence the power of the actor and thereby the capacity for agency. It is therefore part of the structure that influences the capacity for agency.

In other studies it seems as if these preconditions seem to capture the factors influencing regional development initiatives. L. G. Horlings (2010) for example, looks into the concept of vital coalitions, which she defined as

*“a form of active citizenship and self-organisation, in which citizens and/or private or public actors take the initiative to act on behalf of a common concern or interest” (p. 52).*

Vital coalitions in this sense can be seen as similar to the local initiatives that I will focus on in this research. Conditions that shaped the successes of these coalitions were (a) a sense of urgency and a shared story line, (b) entrepreneurship and versatile leadership and (c) government backing. The first condition seems to be similar to the need for a shared vision as seen by Bandura (2006). The second condition seems to be a human resource which empowers the social group. The third condition, government backing is something that is not identifiable in this model, but can be studied in the last research question which focuses on the role of the government specifically.

## 2.4 Agency in places

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In order to use the concept of agency in the study of regions, it is important to study the relation that places have with agency. At least three kinds of agency can be recognised when talking about places, localities or territories. The first kind of agency is the one that resists and fights back. This agency also positions the local against global developments. This can mainly be seen in the work of Escobar (2001). The other kind is more an agency of finding alternatives to the neoliberal structures. Localities possessing this kind of agency, take advantage on those areas of economy and society which are not “subject to globalization and therefore look for alternative economies as Gibson-Graham (2002) have named these. There is one sort of agency that could be added to these and that is the agency to transform the social relationships that are crucial in a particular place. This view of

agency connects very well with the relational reading of place, where connections and networks are important elements and can be found in the work of Massey (1994, 2004)

#### 2.4.1 Resistance, defence of place

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Escobar (2001) argues for a defence of place, in which place regains some importance in the literature instead of the often heard emphasis placed on space.

*“Place is central to issues of development, culture and the environment and is equally essential, on the other, for imagining other contexts for thinking about the construction of politics, knowledge and identity.”* (p. 155).

He calls for a greater attention for the process in which the local practices the global instead of the local being practiced by the global. The best way to understand processes of local defence and social mobilization is through looking inside the region to the ways in which social groups feel rooted to the place. By looking at the ways in which people are attached to the local, places and “place making” can be better understood. Escobar notices that in the literature

*“the global is associated with space, capital, history and agency while the local, conversely, is linked to place, labour, and tradition”* (p. 155).

Agency according to Escobar can also be found in the local, when looking inside this region. Although he pleads for a local defence against globalization forces, he also emphasizes the influence of more global elements such as networks, which for example social movements make use of in their defence of place. In these cases the local can actually use the global in order to defend its place. International food movements can for example provide tools and tips for local food movements in which they can help each other in their strategies. Making use of global networks can in these cases help out local initiatives.

Massey (2004) does like to add that an undifferentiated defence of place maintains the association that the local is good and the global is bad and therefore continues to romanticize the local. Massey calls this process the “exoneration of the local” in which she means the romanticizing of the local, the blaming of all local discontent to global forces and the understanding of globalisation as always produced somewhere else. For Massey, the local needs the global and the global needs the local, a defence of the local would not be as appropriate, but challenging the current construction and role of place, can be.

#### 2.4.2 Changing relations and circumstances

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Arguing from the relational construct of space and place, Massey (2004) states that places themselves are agents in globalization.

*“For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, co-ordinated, produced”* (p. 14).

This view counterforces the often heard notion that places become simply the subjects of globalization and thereby lose their agency. Places respond to the developments that they encounter and in this way have the capacity to respond to these developments and own agency. Woods (2007) also talks about the link between the local, in particular the rural, and the global. He sees the impact of global processes merely as negotiation, manipulation and hybridization, instead of a top-down domination or subordination of the local by the global. He refers to a hybrid countryside in which places are not uniform homogeneous spaces but more places of negotiation and power struggles, in which local agents are also influential.

*“Yet, because the reconstitution of rural places under globalization rests on associational power, local actors retain agency in shaping the circumstances of their enrolment” (Woods 2007)*

In his view, agency is about shaping the right circumstances that would lead to renewed agency.

Sewell (1992) agrees with this emphasis to challenge the current construction and role of place and sees agency as part of social structures. He goes on to say that agency points to the capability of

*“exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree”(p.20).*

In this way he emphasizes the way in which agency can lead to a transformation of structures. The agency in this way refers to the degree of control over the social relations in order to transform them. This view relates to what Oostindie et al. (2008) have stressed in the concept of endogenous development. Extra local factors do not make localities less autonomous or endogenous per se, but it is mainly through the translation and transformation of these extra local factors that endogeneity and autonomy can be shown.

### 2.4.3 Alternatives

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Next to the former emphases on the defence of place and the transformation of relationships another notion of agency can be witnessed. Gibson-Graham (2002) write about this other notion of agency rested in the local, and emphasizes to look at alternative paths. They describe how alternative non-market and non-capitalist economies are often neglected in the literature, but can be important and substantial local economies. Civil organisations, volunteer work among other are often not seen as belonging to the mainstream economics, but can be important economies in localities. This notion can be seen as working beyond the global structures instead of defending against it or transforming them. Although these three forms of agency can be seen as different, they also have many similarities.

Gibson-Graham talk about the “resubjectivation” as a process in which alternative economic institutions and practices can be built (p. 14). Through a change in the relationships that the local has with the global, people can become subjects again instead of simply objects. In identifying alternatives and acknowledging these alternatives they hope to send out a language and stimulate practices that can become in themselves (Gibson-Graham 2002). The finding of alternatives to the global economic structures can result in changing relationships as well in the local setting as between the local and the global. The same holds for the defence of place advocated by Escobar (2001). The defence of place advocated by Escobar might in one region mean building alternative economies, while in the other region it means seriously challenging the power relationships between the local and the global.

A form of these alternative economies that Gibson-Graham talk about can also be described by van der Ploeg et al. (2012) in the concept of nested markets. A combination of the following four characteristics define these newly emerging markets: a demonopolizing effect on existing markets, the construction of new connections between existing markets, the creation of new markets and the development of new governance structures for both existing and new markets. Van der Ploeg et al. explain the emergence of these new markets not as volunteer work and does not focus on the “hidden economy” that Gibson-Graham also talk about. argue that through the growing gap between prices paid by consumers and prices received by farmers a space is created in which these new markets become attractive and even in some cases inevitable. Nested markets differ substantially with the regular market in terms of prices, different distribution of value added, different infrastructure, different location of transactions in space and time and a different governance pattern.

An example is the alternative food market. These newly emerging markets are owned or at least co-owned by the farmers. This refers to a different governance structure in comparison to the mainstream food market that is controlled by food empires. The farmer can be involved in more on-farm activities, such as direct-selling and on-farm processing, which differs substantially from the situation in which the farmer is limited to the delivery of raw materials to the food industry and also alters the location of transaction from the supermarket to the farm. The farmer gets a higher share of the total added value, which was in the mainstream market reserved for the food empires. And finally the income generated in the nested market will be reinvested into the farm, while in the mainstream food market the extra income is invested in expanding this market even further.

These newly emerging markets can thus be seen as an alternative to the mainstream market. In this way it is part of the alternative economies that Gibson-Graham talk about, but focuses specifically on the agricultural sector. The creation of these new markets are a step further than an negotiation over the terms of trade for the agricultural sector and therefore also goes further than the agency that can be seen in the former paragraph in which agency is expressed through changing relationships and circumstances. As is said:

*“new roles and positions are being created, just as new relations and new circuits are being developed and new and commonly shared definitions are being elaborated.”*(p.155).

The creation of these new markets might well lead in the end to an overall change in relationships from the local to the global, but the way in which agency is expressed in these nested markets is the creation of new markets.

#### 2.4.4 Similar concepts

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Other authors have also looked at a form of agency rested in a locality, but have named it slightly differently. DeFilippis (1999) looks at the concept of local autonomy and describes it as:

*“the ever-contested and never complete ability of those within the locality to control the institutions and relationships that define and produce the locality.”* (p. 980).

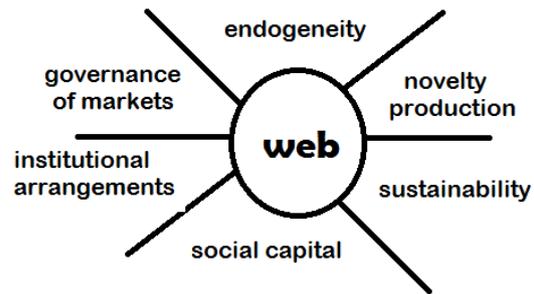
In this definition as well the control over institutions as the relationships are important. He also sees that local autonomy can be achieved through recognition of the relationships and institutions that connect the local to the global, through institutional change to increase control on these relationships and through the creation of new localities. Pickerill and Chatterton (2006) have looked at localities from a similar perspective and use the term *autonomous geographies* to refer to the capacities rested in localities. All these concepts relate to the same notion of agency rested in places and shows the interest there has been in studying this.

The above mentioned theoretical concepts can be useful in the analysis of regions in the Netherlands. Neo-endogenous development, as a territorial notion of place, can be used as the starting point with its focus on the bottom-up potential of regions. Some elements of the relational reading would still be good to use, because regions are especially places in which connections and networks are crucial both within the region as beyond. Especially in the current globalized world, where space moves beyond the territorial meaning, the relational reading of places and their development is important in analysing regional development and therefore cannot be ignored. Important is also to keep in mind that social relations shape places and that places (and also regions) can thus be seen as social constructs. Focusing on the region itself as a territory, with an additional focus on the relationships that are made in the region and beyond, I think, is the best way to research the agency rested in a region. This connects the concepts endogeneity, place and agency and together these concepts can describe the capacity of regions to shape their futures and therefore is crucial in the answering of the research questions.

## 2.5 Rural web

Reasoning from the territorial approach, I will use an analytical tool that can help me to analyse this region. Van der van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008) have developed the rural web, which can be seen as

*“a complex set of internally generated relationships that shape the relative attractiveness of rural spaces, economically, socially, culturally and environmentally.”* (p. VII).



**F** Figure 1 Rural web (van der Ploeg and Marsden 2008)

The web allows for an analysis of strengths and weaknesses in regions along six dimensions which are all interconnected (see figure 1 and table 1).

**Table 1: Operationalization of domains in rural web, adopted from van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008)**

<b>Endogeneity</b>	The degree to which rural economies are organized according to local/regional resources and how these resources and their wealth are controlled.
<b>Novelty</b>	The capacity in the region to gain new insights, practices, artefacts and/or combinations of resources, technological procedures, bodies of knowledge, etc.
<b>Sustainability</b>	The meeting of needs of as well the economy, society and nature, with special attention for economic growth, social justice, ecological protection and inter-generational equity.
<b>Social capital</b>	The ability of people to engage in networks, cooperate and have social relations for common purpose and benefit
<b>New institutional arrangements</b>	New institutional structures and mechanisms that solve coordination problems and support cooperation among rural actors
<b>Market governance</b>	The institutional capacities to control and strengthen existing markets or to construct new ones

In order to strengthen this web, relationships between the different domains are crucial. The more interlinked the web is, the stronger the region will develop. The web is both about resources available in the region as about the connection between these resources; it is about the different capitals (physical capital as well as human and social capital) as about the connections between these resources. In this view on the region and regional development structure as well as agency are important elements, as seen in the structuration theory. The web also sees these elements as not being mutually exclusive:

*“Structures are multiple, contingent, variable and actor-dependent, just as actors face a range of routines, vested interests, shared expectations etc., with which they necessarily have to deal, without being completely governed by them.”* (p.21)

This notion of the rural web connects to the endogenous development literature, where the region itself becomes the most crucial for development, while not neglecting extra local factors.

The rural web can therefore be seen as an analytical tool that can help to analyse different performances of regions, and therefore can also help to locate the agency in the regions. By looking at the different assets and resources available in the region and the way in which these resources are connected and managed, the agency of the people in these regions can be identified. As van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008) have mentioned: the web

*“refers to the many fields of activity in which human actors operate and within which they actively construct (or fail to construct) sustainability, governance, novelties, etc. (p. 11).*

This construction process can be seen as the structuration which Giddens also talks about in his theory on agency. Agency can be identified by the practices performed by actors in these different domains. This web can therefore function as an analytical tool to find out how agency is expressed in the region. By exploring the practices of the people in the six different dimensions, I hope to find the constraining and enabling factors for agency in regions. This notion connects the three forms of agency that were described previously. By focusing on local resources and on endogeneity of the rural economy as a whole, places can form a countervailing power and in a way “defend” the place. Also the change in interrelationships in the region is seen in the web. Because the interlinkages between these different domains are central in the model, relationships and links between these domains and thus the relationships as a whole become important ways of analysing agency. And also the alternative economies, by Gibson-Graham, and the nested markets by van der Ploeg et al. can be recognized, especially in the novelty-domain, which looks specifically at alternative paths. This web seems to capture the way in which agency is performed in development processes of a region.

Although all dimensions seem to be important in the analysis of the region, I think it is good to focus mainly on two of the dimensions of the web, being, social capital and new institutional arrangements. While social capital refers mainly to the ability to get things done collectively, new institutional arrangements is about the ability to structure these mechanisms of cooperation. These two domains can be seen as the social resources, or social capital of the region. There have been case studies all over Europe which have looked at diverging experiences in regional development, making use of the web as an analytical tool. In most of the regions social capital seems to function as an initiator and also as a lubricant.

*“Social capital, combined with effective new institutional arrangements, constitutes the core initiator that triggers positive developments in endogeneity, market governance, sustainability and/or novelty as key outcomes” (van der Ploeg and Marsden 2008, p.190).*

A basis of social capital and new institutional arrangements become a propelling force in these several cases. L. G. Horlings (2012) has looked at social capital and leadership in five regions in Europe and also sees this central role for social capital. Leadership, as an element of social capital can also work as a trigger towards social capital. Interestingly, she found that individual leadership in her cases seems more important on a regional scale, while collective leadership seems to be more important on a smaller than regional scale. In this research I can see whether this also holds for het Vechtdal en de Kempen. This research also shows the intertwinement of the domains social capital and new institutional arrangements. Where institutional arrangements may be lacking, social capital can be found, but social capital can on the other hand also stimulate the forming of new institutions. Bringing these two domains central in my rural web, allows me to see whether and how also in these cases, social capital and new institutional arrangements can initiate development and capacities that can bring about positive development in the regions, and therefore are expressing agency.

## 2.6 Conceptual framework

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After analysing the different theoretical contributions to the analysis of regions, their place based development and agency, the following step is to see how these theories can contribute to the conceptual framework in which these theories can be used in the context of my case studies. I will first look at agency in the rural web, in the form of practices, in which the organization of social capital and new institutional arrangements are the starting point. Then I will look at enabling and constraining factors that will be identified using the four properties by Bandura (2006) and Dietz and Burns (1992) for agency and complement these by the resources and schemas that are said to constrain or enable agency.

Neo-endogenous development is the context in which regions can be analysed. It emphasizes that the starting point of analysing localities should be with the local resources and the relationships controlling these resources. An endogenous, territorial approach links very well with this emphasis on taking the locality itself as the starting point. The relational reading of places adds to this the emphasis on relationships and connections and the agency that can be identified in altering these relationships. The region will also be seen as constructed by people and therefore is without pre-given characteristics. The region itself does not perform agency, but the people and institutions inside the region do this by actively constructing this region and its boundaries.

The practice of agency can be formed in different ways as seen in the literature. First as defence of place, in which places are seen as autonomous localities and it is in this autonomy from factors outside the locality, agency can be identified. Another way is through alternative economies or nested markets, as Gibson-Graham and van der Ploeg et al. have mentioned. And the third way is through a change in the relationships.

### 2.6.1 Rural web

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The rural web, as an analytical tool in endogenous development makes it possible to look at regions and also locate this agency that the literature talks about. By exploring the six different dimensions, over two regions, with an emphasis on social capital and new institutional arrangements, I hope to be able to find how agency is expressed in places. More specifically and according to the definition of community agency by Brennan and Luloff (2007), I hope to see the in which way local people are able to build relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite and act. In this rural web agency can be seen as the ways in which social capital and new institutional arrangements together influence the development of the other dimensions in the web. The following framework shows the ways in which the different concepts interact and more specifically looks into what happens inside the central arrow of agency. In this arrow we can see in which ways agency is shown from the inner dimensions (social capital, new institutional arrangements) towards the other four dimensions. The relationship between social capital and new institutional arrangements is in particular important, because it can show in which way agency is primarily steered from the social capital dimension (from within the initiative) or from the institutional arrangements (external to the initiatives). The arrows between these two dimensions reflect the relationship between these two dimensions and in which way this relationship hampers or creates agency for the initiatives.

Important to keep in mind is what Paasi (2010) has said about agency. Looking at agency is according to him mainly about daily practices performed by a multitude of actors inside the region and beyond. By giving meaning to this region, the region becomes an established part of a wider system. When identifying agency in the regions, it is important to keep this social constructivism in mind and in the research this will mean that I will mainly look at practices and how people perceive the development of their region.

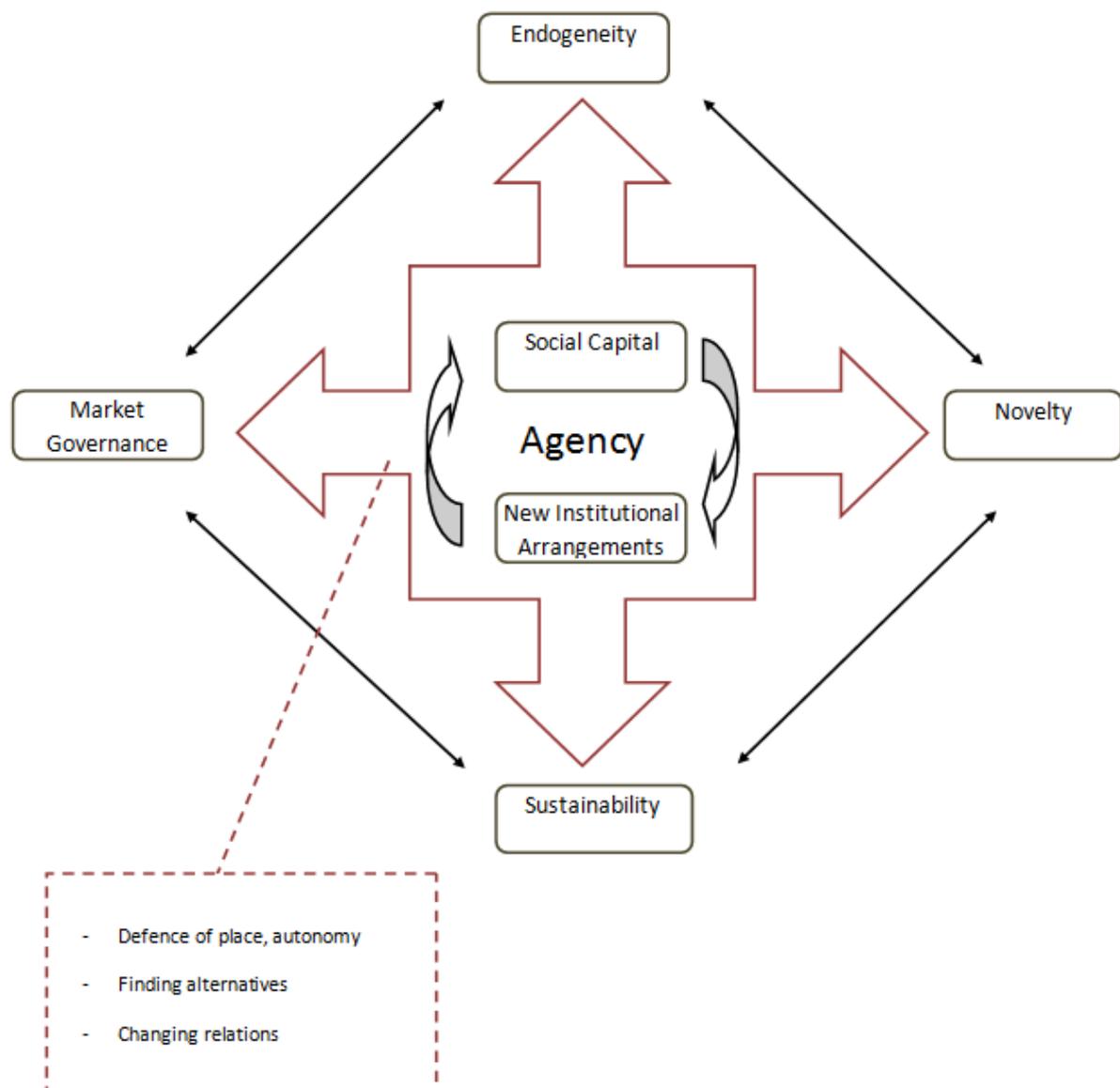


Figure 2: The adopted rural web

### 2.6.2 The dimensions of the web

In order to look into the different domains of the rural web, it first is important to have a clear understanding of these dimensions. As is said in the theoretical framework, agency is found by the interaction of social capital and new institutional arrangements and the way in which these two dimensions have an effect on the endogeneity, sustainability, market governance and novelty dimension. Because of this central role of these two dimensions, more emphasis will be given to them, also in the interviews.

#### Social capital

In the theoretical framework social capital was described as *“the ability of people to engage in networks, cooperate and have social relations for common purpose and benefit”*.

In this operationalization I would like to make a distinction between collective social capital and individual social capital. As L. G. Horlings (2012) has shown, leadership has been crucial in some regional development initiatives. By looking at the collective dimension of social capital only, the

individual dimension would be overseen. Leaders of change can also be seen as individual or shared forms of leadership in which passion to mobilize people around the shared ambitions and the ability to form alliances and creating novelties are crucial, referred as such by L. G. Horlings (2012). It can thus be seen as another way in which the social capital influences the other domains of the rural web. Newman and Dale (2005) have looked at the role of agency in sustainable local community development and emphasize the importance of looking at social capital in this sense. They prefer to differentiate between bonding and bridging social capital, because these are said to lead to different development outcomes. Bonding social capital are seen as the stronger ties which exist in close communities and which enable trust, while bridging ties refer more to the ties that people have beyond the social group and are less strong, but able to bring in additional resources and information.

#### New institutional arrangements

The second dimension looks at *“new institutional structures and mechanisms that solve coordination problems and support cooperation among rural actors”*. Institutions have been defined very broadly, which for example is done by (Seumas 2012) *“Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life.”* Giddens also writes about institutions being institutional orders and political, economic and legal institutions. This definition provides some more detailed information about what is meant with these institutions. For this research I will focus on these political, economic and legal institutions. This would exclude the more general enduring features of social life, such as norms, behaviour, rules etc. and also not look at informal initiatives. I will thus focus on organized groups of people who can be seen as legal, economic or political entities. This dimension will analyse the local initiatives internally, which themselves can be seen as institutions and also look at other institutions in the region with whom the initiative has contact.

The dimensions social capital and new institutional arrangements have been the focus point of drawing the rural web. After having asked about these two dimensions, I have asked about the other dimensions and asked in which way the basis of social capital and new institutional arrangements effects their practices.

#### Endogeneity

In the theoretical framework this dimension was described as *“the degree to which rural economies are organized according to local/regional resources and how these resources and their wealth is controlled.”* In order to make this definition suitable for this research I would like to focus on the ways in which local initiatives are able to make use of the regional resources (culture, customs, local food etc.) and in which way they themselves are in control of these and that this control leads to added value.

#### Novelty

The second dimension was explained as *“the capacity in the region to gain new insights, practices, artefacts and/or combinations of resources, technological procedures, bodies of knowledge, etc.”* This category is rather well operationalized.

#### Sustainability

The third category concerns *“the meeting of needs of as well the economy, society and nature, with special attention for economic growth, social justice, ecological protection and inter-generational equity”*. This category will look into the visions that the local initiatives have on the sustainability of the region as a whole and also in which way these initiatives take action towards developing this vision.

#### Market governance

This dimension looks into *“the institutional capacities to control and strengthen existing markets or to construct new ones”*. This dimension will be applicable for the initiatives that have connections

to the market, which can be different for every initiative. I will focus upon the ways in which these initiatives are able to control the market, how they are able to strengthen this market and how they are able to construct new markets.

### 2.6.3 Agency in practice: three typologies

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In the further operationalization of agency I would like to go back to the notion that Paasi (2010) has given on regions and agency, in which regions are seen as social constructs and agency is shown in practices of people. Therefore I will look mainly at what the initiatives are purposively doing, which shows their agency. This will come down to asking about the projects that the initiatives are developing and looks at the ways in which the initiatives are bringing their visions for the regions in reality. The second and the third research question will lead to interview topics on the practices that their initiative is working on and what they have already achieved in the past. When asking about these practices, I have focused on the domains of the rural web: novelties, market governance, endogeneity and sustainability.

In the theoretical framework three forms of expressing this agency were found in connection to places. By filling in the rural web for the initiatives, I have been able to show whether their agency can be seen as a defence of place, as changing relationships or as alternatives to the regular paths.

#### Resistance, defence of place

The first form of agency written by Escobar (2001) sees the local as opposed to the global. People in his view feel connected to the place they live and therefore want to have control of the relationships that from the outside influence the locality and “defend” the place from these external influences. Motivations of people to engage in the development of the place can be a good indicator to see whether the initiative they are working on is motivated for a defence of the local. There is not one dimension of the rural web that would give the best view on this form of agency. The ability of the initiative to use endogenous resources and to control them could be a good indicator of the defence of place, explained by Escobar. But also other dimensions, such as new market governance could as well be linked to a defence of place; a newly created local food market is also a way to work around the global food system and “defend” the local food network.

#### Changing relations

The second form of agency that is seen in the literature is agency through changing relationships. Relationships are thus central in this form of agency. Therefore it is necessary to look at the relationships that the initiatives have with other parties in the region. By filling in the web, the relationships between social capital, new institutional arrangements and the other four domains can be shown and therefore changing relationships must not be limited to social relationships only. In order to see whether relationships are changed I will ask people about their past and current relationships with other parties in the region. The local initiatives can for example have increased their relations with the private sector in order to achieve their goals and show agency in this sense. Relationships can also be built in the form of public-private alliances, where different parties, with whom collaboration has not existed before, begin to work together. When the rural web shows an overall increase or change in relationships over the domains or with new partners, the local initiative will focus mainly on agency in the form of changing relationships.

#### Alternative economies

The last expression of agency can be seen as the building of alternative economies. In the research I will focus in particular on the way that van der van der Ploeg et al. (2012) have talked about nested markets as a form of alternative economy. The reason for this is that I will particularly focus on local initiatives that work in the field of nature, landscape, agriculture and food. In these sectors, the concept of nested markets fits with what can be seen as alternative in these themes. When an initiative can be seen as a nested market will be based on the domains of market

governance, and novelty production, which focus in particular on the alternative niches in the market.

#### 2.6.4 Enabling/constraining factors for agency

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While the former questions focused on the way in which agency is expressed, on the practices of the initiatives in the regions, the other research question looks into the constraining and enabling factors for agency. This analyses the capacity for agency and the determinants for agency to be expressed. With this focus it is good to look back at the duality of structures as explained by Giddens and Sewell. Capacity for agency here depends on structures in which the agency is enmeshed. Capacity for agency was both structured by schemas (virtual structures) and by resources, human as well as non-human. (Sewell 1992)

When describing constraining and enabling factors for agency for the two initiatives it is important to see how schemas and resources affect the capacity for agency in these two regions and first of all to define what is exactly meant with schemas and resources in the context of regional initiatives in the two regions. Therefore it is important to further operationalize these concepts.

#### Schemas

The nonmaterial structures, or patterns of principles, are said to influence the potential for agency. Sewell (1992) has said that through knowledge of these patterns of principles, agency can be identified and resources can be mobilized. During fieldwork, I think it is hard to find out whether the respondents are aware of the cultural schemas, patterns, principles of the people living in the region and therefore if the respondents or the group that they are representing is using this knowledge and in this way is showing agency. I do think that these schemas have the potential to influence the agency of social groups and therefore should be taken into account. I also think that cultural schemas can overlap with personal motivation of people, because norms, values and principles can become internalised in the personal beliefs of the agent and therefore not so much seen as structures from external forces but seen as internal motivation. Although it will be impossible (and not useful) to determine whether motivation and beliefs are external or internal to the agent, it is good to keep in mind that contrasting schemas between a social group and the region or inside the social group can have an effect on the agentic potential of the local initiative. For example, when a food initiative is ideologically committed to using only organic products and the region is not willing to buy these products, the potential agency of the initiative can be decreased. This cultural schema can influence the agentic potential of an initiative. On the other hand cultural schemas can also enhance the potential for agency. In a region, where there is a good working mentality, people can be more inclined to start up initiatives and start working, which increases the potential agency in the region as a whole.

In order to make this concept of schemas more concrete I can find out what has been written about schemas in the two regions. In a book written by Meertens and de Vries (1938) "*De Nederlandse Volkskarakters*" different characters of regions in the Netherlands are described. The character of the population living east of the river IJssel, which is somewhat similar to the eastern part of the Vechtdal area, is seen as living in closed communities. They feel strongly bounded to their own people, which is restricted mostly to their own village or family. This is said to originate from their conservatism, their sense of duty and the regard for everything that is great and big and appointed as a ruler by God. Because of their oppression they have learnt to accept and take in ("*Teggen groote leu möj zwiegen of joa zeggen*" (p.78). Other character traits that are mentioned are peacefulness ("*hij spreekt zich bij voorkeur uit alleen in eigen kring*"(p.79) and indecisiveness, the inertia in decision making. This last trait is said to connect to laziness and also originating from a tendency to deliberate and not be resolute. People are also said to be thrift and frugal as is shown in the following saying from a farmer in the region "*a'j gein beschimmeld brood wilt ätten, wor iej, neit rieke*" (p. 82), which means that if you are not willing to eat mouldy bread, you will not get rich. Other character traits fitting this population are honesty, fairness and a tendency to imitate each

other. A positive trait is said to be a tendency to help the neighbours (noaberschap), which is mainly seen with farmers, but the author does want to add the economic incentive, that is often underlying these acts. The last trait is said to be hospitality; once they have accepted an outsider, they will treat them as guests.

In this book there is also a chapter about the eastern part of Brabant, which talks about four sub regions among which Kempenland is one. Unity is said to be a key characteristic of the people living her. Because of the shared history of wars, poverty and persecution they have united even stronger. People in these regions are said to be hospitable and helpful and in spite of their unity also open to outsiders. Catholic faith has always been present in the region and contributes to a schema of acceptance and simplicity. The other side of this schema is that they are not very punctual on meeting agreements and promises, which is nicely visible in the following quote :*“het kumt zoo nauw niet”* (p.292), which means something like “it is not that strict”. Punctuality according to these people decreases the warm-heartedness which is more in the nature of the people in the eastern part of Brabant.

By using these character types I do not mean to suggest that these traits are still today the same as they were in 1937, but merely to show that these deeper grounded traits might still today have an influence on regional development initiatives and give hints for differential outcomes in regional organization and initiatives.

## Resources

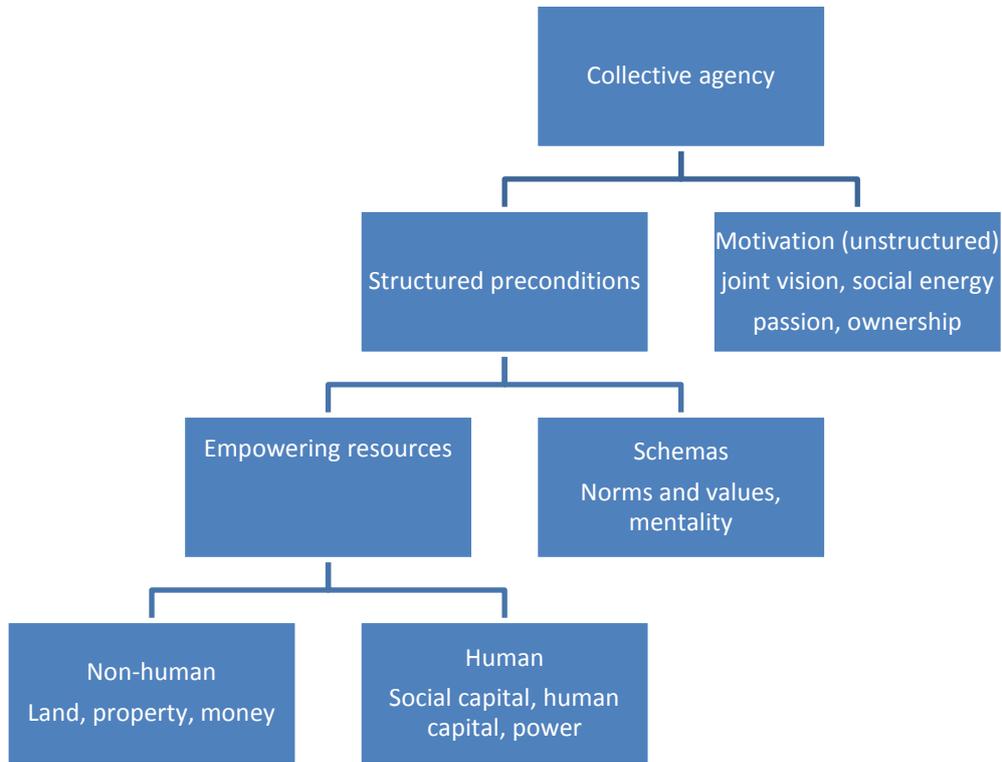
Resources are divided into human and non-human resources and both of these resources maintain or enable power to the owner of the resource. The non-human can concern land, money, property or all other material things which empowers the holder of these resources. In the context of regional development, I can imagine that when farmers own the majority of plots in a region that they become a more powerful actor in deciding on the future of this region and therefore are empowered by their resources and in the end have more potential for agency. Human resources on the other hand refer more to capabilities and capacities that lead to empowerment, which can refer to knowledge and skills and also to social capital. As already seen in the rural web, social capital is seen as an important domain in the study of regions. By making use of social capital, agents can access more human resources.

### 2.6.5 Properties of agency

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As seen in the theoretical framework, there are four pre-conditions that endow an actor with agency and the first of these preconditions was about the intention of the agent. When looking at agency, this will be the starting point. The other properties will be covered in other parts of the conceptual framework: Practices will be identified in the making of the rural web. Power can be seen as a resource and therefore as a precondition for agency and monitoring capacity as a human resource and will this also fall in the terminology given by Sewell (1992).

In order to connect these different indicators of agency, I have created a framework which connects the structures defining agency according to Sewell and the properties of agency that were identified by Dietz and Burns (1992) and by Bandura (2006). These unstructured preconditions for agency lie more in the social group itself and can be seen as internal mechanisms or motivation for agency. The structured preconditions for agency originate from the structures surrounding the social group and are divided into virtual schemas and resources that empower or disempower. These resources are then divided into human and non-human resources as is done by Sewell and gives the following framework.



**Figure 3: Framework for identifying preconditions for collective agency**

## 3. Research methodology

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### 3.1 Research design

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In order to answer my research questions, I have made use of qualitative research methods. These methods are most useful while they allow for an in-depth study on human behaviour and also for a study into the reasons for this behaviour. Qualitative data therefore focuses more on words while quantitative data uses figures and numbers to get to results. Qualitative methods are most useful while my research is aimed at understanding the practices, motivations and visions of people which are more easily described in words than in figures. Qualitative data allows the analysis of motivations, visions and goals, which would be much more difficult with quantitative methods.

Next to that this research has taken an inductive approach. I have not formed hypotheses in order to test these in the real world, but have tried to find commonalities and theories looking at the real world situation. Another characteristic is that qualitative methods look primarily at the ways that people interpret their social worlds. Qualitative methods are not suited to measure people's visions or opinion objectively and therefore the results that come from the methods will be interpretations of this social world by the respondents. The last characteristic emphasizes the social constructivism of these methods. It sees qualitative data as "created" by individuals and not data that can be measured without these individuals (Bryman 2004).

#### 3.1.1 Multiple case study

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This research has an explorative character. There has not been much research done in this specific field, which makes an exploratory study most useful at this moment. I have not tested explicit hypotheses, which makes the study less useful for a causal research. A research method that is useful for an exploratory design is the (multiple) case study.

The multiple case study design is an extension of the single case study that analyses a single case detailed and intensively (Bryman 2004). Yin (2009) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry which "*investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context*" (p. 18) and emphasizes the importance of looking into contextual conditions for understanding the phenomenon. Other important properties of a case study design is the abundance of variables, compared to limited variables in single quantitative data, the use of multiple sources of evidence, referred to as triangulation and the use of prior developments in theory in order to guide data collection and analysis. Next to the single case study, a multiple case study is similar to the single-case study, except for the additional cross-case analysis which will have to be performed after the single cases have been studied as can be seen in the figure below.

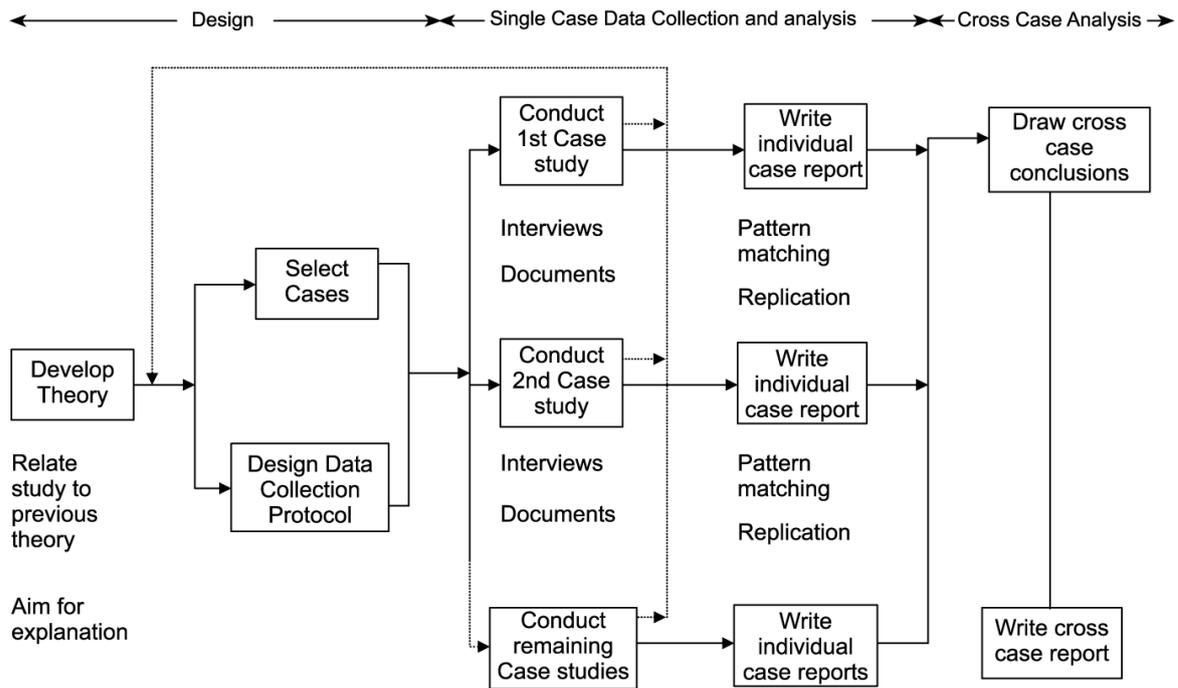


Figure 4 Case study design adopted from Yin (2009)

The case study design was appropriate in this research, because it allows for an in-depth analysis into two different regions in the Netherlands. The contexts of the regions are expected to be crucial in the outcomes of the research questions and therefore this design would be best to analyse this interaction between the context and local initiative.

Multiple case studies can be used one the one hand to replicate a single case with similar characteristics or on the other hand to compare two cases which are expected to show diverging outcomes (Yin 2009). Before doing the field work, I expected the regions to both show similarities as well as contrasting elements. The similarity of the regions was situated in the fact that these are both in a process of regional development, which is crucial in order to answer my research questions. This also connects to the fact that there is sufficient information available about the development of the regions, which helps for getting a general understanding of the regions. On the other hand I expect these cases to also show differences. I have chosen to focus on two Dutch regions, de Kempen in the province of Brabant and het Vechtdal in the province of Overijssel. These cases are differently organized in regional development. From the first literature I had seen on these cases it seemed as of de Kempen are relatively more organized as a region, than het Vechtdal is. More institutional arrangements have already been created in de Kempen, while in het Vechtdal regional development initiatives seem to be more fragmented and not as organized as in de Kempen. This difference in organization allowed me as a researcher to compare the regions and analyse the different circumstances and the effect it has on regional development and the ways in which these different contexts affect the agency that is expressed in the regions and also which factors constrain and/or enable this agency.

Another element that Yin (2009) has mentioned is the possibility of triangulation, which allows for the findings of one source to be cross-checked using another source. In this research I have made use of as well literature study as well as interviewing methods in order to answer the research questions. With the interviews I have sampled respondents from different backgrounds which has increased the reliability of the results.

### 3.1.2 The cases

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In both regions I have focused on specific regional initiatives with little or no governmental influence. The reason for focusing on these initiatives has to do with the objectives of this research. In order to be able to look at the ways in which agency and capacity are currently expressed to develop regions, this is mainly about the capacity of groups of citizens and not about governmental capacity. This does not mean, however, that this research will only look at pure non-governmental initiatives. Governments at provincial, municipal and national level do play a role in regional development and therefore the relationship between the initiative and the government should as well be analysed. Next to that, in regional development, the government is more and more seen as a partner in alliance building, as is most visible in Brabant. So although the structures are also important to a certain extent in these regions, the focus of this research is however on agency, which translates in this case to the bottom-up initiatives.

I have focused specifically on initiatives in landscape, nature, agriculture and food themes: food cooperatives and agri-environmental associations. These initiatives are present in both regions, which made it easier to compare the agency and the constraining and enabling factors in the regions as well as between the initiatives. Another important criterion is that these initiatives fit more or less the scale of the research and thus cover an area, bigger than a municipality, which is at least the case when analysing agri-environmental associations, who focus on landscape and nature issues.

### 3.1.3 Literature study

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I have used scientific literature in order to generate a theoretical framework for my research, to operationalize theoretical concepts and in order to get a first impression of the area of study and the cases. I have mainly used literature from scientific journals and books to develop a theoretical framework. The concepts of neo-endogenous development, place based development, the rural web and agency have been analysed and used for my conceptual framework. The concept of agency is further operationalized using the literature. I have also used secondary literature (regional visions, websites of initiatives, governmental papers) in order to get a first impression of the regions.

### 3.1.4 Exploratory interviews

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In the first weeks of fieldwork, I have conducted twelve interviews; five in de Kempen and seven in het Vechtdal. I interviewed people from different sectors involved in regional development (government, civil society, market) in both of these regions. These interviews helped me to get a general view on the region and to find key stakeholders for the second round of interviews. These respondents in general had a broad knowledge on the region and had been involved in the development of the region for some time. Purposive sampling is used, because in order to identify key stakeholders specific information is needed which not any respondent is able to give on his own. I have located these respondents by finding contact information on websites and by snowball sampling. By asking different people involved in regional development, who they think would have a broad knowledge based on regional development, important respondents were located and contacted. In these interviews I have found answers for the first two research questions, which also made it possible to perform a network analysis, which will be elaborated upon in the next paragraph (Bryman (2004)). I have added a topic list for these exploratory interviews in the appendices. The reason for conducting more interviews in het Vechtdal than in de Kempen, was because I found it more difficult to do my network analysis in het Vechtdal than in de Kempen. When asking for respondents for the second round of interviews this was more easily done in de Kempen than in het Vechtdal. In order to get a complete picture of the involved institutions and actors, I needed more exploratory interviews in het Vechtdal compared to de Kempen.

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### 3.1.5 Social network analysis

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In order to map the relevant actors and institutions I have performed a social network analysis. In this method agents, both individual and collective, are depicted as embedded in webs of connections which then are explained and described (Scott 1988). In this network analysis I have asked respondents to name the institution/organizations/individual actors with whom they have connections regarding regional development and what the nature of this connection is. I have also asked the actors with whom the respondent does not have any connections, but who is involved in regional development. After having asked the respondent to name the connections that he can come up with, I have specifically asked about the private, civil society and governmental sector in order not to overlook any connections. The different actors, in the form of nodes, and connections, in the form of ties, are visualized in a graph which is shown in the following chapters.

### 3.1.6 Semi-structured interviews

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The second round of interviews were semi-structured and held with the identified stakeholders from the network analysis. Per initiative, I interviewed two or three key stakeholders; of whom at least one was involved with the initiative one external respondent from either the government or another affiliated party is interviewed. In the appendix a list shows the different respondents. This list has people that are involved from the civic sector, non-government related, but also the government officials that are involved in the development of the region. I included this external person to be able to get a more dependent view in the agency of the initiatives. When I had interviewed people from the initiatives only, I would not have found the results I have now.

The partly structured nature of the interviews allowed for some freedom in the interview for the respondent to mention issues that are important in his/her eyes, which would be more difficult when conducting more structured interviews. The use of an interview guide has provided a relevant structure for these interviews and made sure that all topics were covered.

## 3.2 Analytical concepts

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As seen in the conceptual framework, agency is constituted from the following elements.

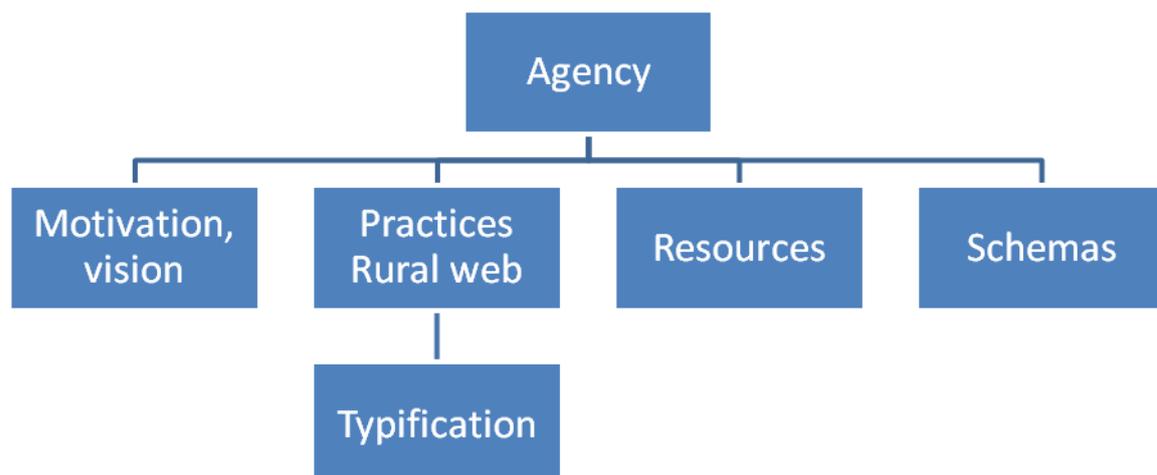


Figure 5 Different indicators to measure agency

### 3.2.1 Motivation, vision

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The first indicator of agency has been measured by vision and motivation and looks into the factor of intention as a part of agency. This question was answered in both the first as the second round of interviews. In the first round, I asked the respondents from different backgrounds on their own vision on the region and also about other visions on the future of the region. By asking people from different backgrounds, government, civil society, local initiatives and from the private sector, I have covered the most important visions for the region. I have also made use of secondary literature in the form of agendas for regions or regional plans, in which visions are already spelt out.

In the second round of interviews, I have focused on particular initiatives, I have asked the respondents, speaking on behalf of the initiatives, what motivates them and their initiatives, what the goals, strategies and future plans are for the region and how they are intended to accomplish their goals. I have also asked to mention possible contrasting visions, or joint and shared vision that the initiative has with other parties in the region.

### 3.2.2 Practices

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In order to find out in which way the initiatives are expressing agency, I have looked at the practices of the initiatives and made use of the rural web. I have used the semi-structured interviews of the second round to fill in the web and to be able to find practices of the initiatives, focusing specifically on the four dimensions of the rural web.

#### **Rural web**

As seen in the conceptual framework, the main focus of the rural web for this research is the dimensions social capital and new institutional arrangements. These two dimensions were the basis from where I have further elaborated on the other dimensions of the rural web.

Social capital focuses on collaboration in the form of:

- bridging social capital (relationships with other initiatives, institutions)
- bonding social capital (relationships with people mainly inside the initiative)
- leadership as well collective as individual. People or groups of people who are crucial in the development for the realization of ambitions of the initiative. Passion to mobilize people around shared ambitions and abilities to form alliances and creating novelties are crucial in this view on leadership.

New institutional arrangements focus on legal, economic or political entities. This would therefore exclude initiatives that have just started up and focus more on structures that have been present in the region for some time. Questions are asked on the internal organization of the initiative, the legal form and also about other structures such as (local government, provincial government, civil society, and businesses)

In the next phase of using the rural web, I have asked how the local initiative is able to influence the other four dimensions by its social and institutional organization. In the interviews I have asked the respondents of the initiatives about their practices in the following fields, discussing the following topics:

- Sustainability: Is the initiative working to become ecologically, socially and economically healthy in the future.
- Endogeneity: Is the initiative based on local characteristics, making use of local culture, local food, the landscape and nature
- Market governance: Is the initiative making use of markets or able to create new ones: making use of marketing, institutions and newly emerging markets.

- Novelty: Is the initiative able to gain new insights and focuses on knowledge, networking skills, innovation, organizational changes

### Typification

After having filled in the rural webs for the region, I have also reflected back on the theory about agency in practice and analysed whether these initiatives can be seen as either a defence of place, changing of relationships or alternative nested markets.

### 3.2.3 Constraining and enabling factors

After looking at the practices of the initiatives, I have looked into the possible constraining and enabling factors. In the conceptual framework I have made a distinction between resources, human and non-human and schemas.

Table 2: Possible constraining resources

Human	Non-human
Manpower	money
Time	subsidies
	private sources
entrepreneurship	
organisation skills	property, land
Perseverance	physical space, building
networking skills	
social capital:	
bonding	
Bridging	
Leadership	

### Schemas

Schemas were hard to pin down to specific topics and have also become evident indirectly when I asked questions about constraining factors or about the different visions for the region. I have chosen to only look at the schema in the regions. In order to clarify the meaning of schemas I have used the typology given by Meertens and de Vries (1938) to give examples of schemas of people and if the respondents recognize these traits.

For het Vechtdal area these have been: conservatism, sense of duty , regard for authority, faithfulness, peacefulness, indecisiveness, the inertia in decision making, tendency to deliberate, thrift and frugal honesty, fairness, a tendency to imitate, neighbour help

For Brabant these have been: unity, hospitability, helpfulness, openness to outsiders, catholic faith, mentality of acceptance and simplicity, not very punctual and warm-heartedness.

For the interviews I have probed some of these traits of De Nederlandse Volkskarakters” in order to make the traits more clear, when people did not know what I was aiming at. Then I have asked whether they recognized these traits, if they would like to add traits and if they feel restricted or enabled by these traits.

After questions about the more general character of the region, I have also asked about the schemas of people working with the government or of people from the private sector and how this schema affects the working of the initiative and also ask if these sub groups have different schemas and if these affect the local initiative.

### 3.2.4 Government, policy

For the last research question which focuses upon the role of the government and policy, I already asked the respondents about their relationship with the local government, when talking about the rural web. This last research question will therefore mainly lead to the recommendations that follow from this thesis.

### 3.3 Summary of methodology

In the following table I have summarized the sources for my research questions.

**Table 3: Summary of the used methodology**

<b>Research question:</b>	<b>Expected sources:</b>
1. How have the two regions developed into their current state and what is the vision for the future?	Primary, secondary literature (for example visions for the regions from LEADER, governmental plans etc.) semi-structured (1 <sup>st</sup> round of) interviews
2. Which actors/institutions are involved in the development of the region?	Primary, secondary literature, (1st round of) semi-structured interviews, social network analysis
3. How is agency expressed in region A? 4. How is agency expressed in region B?	Primary, secondary literature, semi-structured interviews (2 <sup>nd</sup> round)
5. What are constraining and enabling factors for agency in these two regions?	Semi-structured interviews (2 <sup>nd</sup> round)
6. What role can government and policy play now and in the future?	Semi-structured interviews (2 <sup>nd</sup> round)

### 3.4 Reflection on research methodology

In this paragraph I will reflect on the methodological choices I have made in order to conduct this research. I will start by giving some general information on the quality of the data and proceed with analysing the reliability and validity of the research.

#### 3.4.1 Quality of data

The interviews were conducted in two phases. In the first series of interviews I have performed interviews by telephone as well as face-to face. This had very practical reasons, because in this first round of interviews time could have been lost in travelling, while this time could also have been invested in doing more exploratory interviews or proceeding with the analysis of these interviews. Therefore I have chosen to conduct these by telephone. I am aware that face-to face interviewing has benefits over telephone interviewing (seeing when respondents don't understand, making use of visual aids etc.) and therefore in the second round of interviews, in which the main questions of my research will be answered, I have spoken to every respondent face-to face.

In this second round I have also made use of tape-recordings. This allowed me to listen to the respondents more closely during the interviews while not having to pay attention to writing everything down. Before the interviews I have asked permission from the respondent for taping the interview; all of the respondents agreed to be taped. By taping the interview, respondents might have felt less willing to talk about more sensitive issues and not feel comfortable to talk freely. On the other hand I have also asked the respondents for permission to include their citations anonymously, which makes them aware of the results of their input anyway and therefore also makes it possible to not allow the use of citations. The benefits of taping for me were the

impossibility of missing important data and the possibility of using citations, which has made the thesis more readable.

After doing the second-round interviews I have transcribed them literally. This would make the subjective interpretation of the data in this stage of the analysis as limited as possible. Furthermore I have sent the transcriptions to the respondents and have given them the opportunity to make adjustments on facts. The adjustments that have been made did not alter the results content wise, but merely focused on misheard facts.

After the transcription and writing of the interviews, I have coded the interviews according to basic themes. Then I have read the interviews and put the coded parts of every initiative together. After that was done, I went through the transcripts once more and added additional information. This method of categorizing has made the analysis of data easier in the next phase and has also committed me to go through the interviews multiple times. This also minimized the chance of missing important data.

### 3.4.2 Construct validity

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This first indicator of validity is about the measures of the concepts to be studied and whether these measures are able to measure the concepts that the study is intended to measure. Well operationalized concepts and review of these concepts by literature and experts can help to increase construct validity (Yin 2009). In this research I have made use of operationalizations already used in the literature, such as the rural web. This web has already shown to be able to analyse regional development in van der van der Ploeg and Marsden (2008). The topic list of the interviews has also been reviewed by my supervisor who from her experience in conducting fieldwork is able to give feedback and hereby increase the construct validity.

While doing the interview, I noticed that for some interview questions, the respondents were not exactly sure about the meaning of the concept I used. For example when using the word sustainability, this was not well operationalized and therefore, people understood this word differently. In these cases I have asked the respondents what they consider themselves to be sustainability. This at least made it possible for me to get clear what the respondents meant, but on the other hand also did not get to information about what I consider to be sustainability. A next time I would prefer to not use the word sustainability anymore and further operationalize the concept into concepts that cannot be misunderstood or differently interpreted.

### 3.4.3 Internal validity

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The next indicator, internal validity, deals mostly with explanatory and causal studies and is therefore less appropriate for this research, while it is more explorative in nature. It deals with finding explanations for certain phenomena and is about not too easily stating that one factor has led to the other, but of knowing for sure that the one factor has led to the other (Yin 2009). Although I have not looked for explanations for certain phenomena in this study, there is always a danger of too easily stating that one factor has led to another. It is important that while analysing the data, I am aware of the causal claims that I am making and if this is actually what the data is referring to. Triangulation can be used in order to be able to make statements more robust. By using different sources of information, websites, respondents from an initiative and policy makers, statements about the effectiveness of the initiative could be made more confidently. When making such statements it is good to then refer to these different sources as a way to increase the validity of the statement.

### 3.4.4 External validity

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This indicator refers to the generalizability of the research. This is seen as problematic in case studies in general, because it only provides data on one case and therefore is hard to generalize to other cases (Yin 2009). In these regions I do make use of more than one case, which makes it possible to replicate the findings, but still this would not make the outcome generalizable to Dutch regions in

general. The contexts of these two regions are very different which makes it impossible to generalize based on these cases. I can make statements about these regions and see patterns occurring in these two regions, but it would be not sufficient to generalize these to the rest of the Netherlands or even to a larger scale.

### 3.4.5 Reliability

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The reliability of a research is based on the ability to replicate the exact same research and find the same analyses and conclusions. To increase the reliability researchers must make clear and document every step that they have taken (Yin 2009). In case studies it is hard to replicate the exact study and find similar answers. Social situations change and cannot be “frozen” to be analysed by researchers. It is possible to document as many steps as possible that I have taken. In the methodological chapter I have made some choices on sampling, operationalizations and account for these choices so that replication would lead to closest-to similar results.

Another factor that influences the reliability of the results is the semi-structured nature of the interviews. This allows for freedom in the interviews and therefore benefits the open setting, in which the respondent is more open to answer and be less structured by my questions. This structure allows for freedom, but also limits the reliability of the results. In order to increase the quality of data for answering the research question, some reliability might get lost.

Another factor is my personal role as a researcher. Being a relatively inexperienced interviewer surely influences the outcome of the interviews and can decrease the reliability of results. I think this does not necessarily decrease overall quality of the data; it could also be that my relative inexperience with these issues allows for more open conversation with the respondents in which much more data can be gathered than with an experienced researcher.

Finally triangulation of sources was useful in order to increase the reliability of this study. By using different sources of data, semi-structured interviewing and literature study, I have increased the reliability of results. The respondents of the interviews will come from different backgrounds (policy, civil society, private sector) which make the data that these interviews produce, more reliable than coming from one source only. Especially when asking questions about the practices and results that an initiative has accomplished, it was also good to ask someone not involved in the initiative about these results in order to see them in perspective. Triangulation can thus be seen as a means to increase validity as well as reliability and is therefore important for the overall quality of the research. I did notice that it was hard to find many documents to verify the data I have got from the interviews. While some documents have been published quite openly, for initiatives that are just starting up, the data were not always available.

Another thing that could have influenced the overall quality of the research is the sampling of respondents. While I have tried to find as many relevant respondents by snowball sampling and by use of my network analysis, this also brings the problem of finding mainly the usual suspects in a region. I was very dependent on the names that the respondents have mentioned and hereby could have missed people that were not part of this network. This is an inevitable effect of doing this kind of research with a limited amount of time, but still the sampling could have been more valid and overall could have increased the quality of data.



#### 4. Scope and limitation of the study

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In this research I have focused on two regions in the Netherlands and therefore the results cannot be generalized to other cases per se. The case study design as said before, is an in-depth study to analyse one or more cases detailed and intensely. Therefore it is also not intended to be generalized to bigger populations. It is mainly meant to gain insight in a) the way that agency is expressed b) the preconditions that are needed for this agency to be expressed and c) the specific role that policy and governments can have in these regions specifically. These findings can produce theory embedded in these two regions and cannot be copied directly to other regions. They can merely serve as examples of regional collaboration for regions with similar characteristics.

Furthermore, by focusing on specific initiatives in these regions, there is a chance that I have not covered the whole region and therefore miss important developments. To focus on local initiatives is a choice I have made, which allows me to look more closely to the processes and practices happening on the ground, which would be less possible when taking the whole region as a research unit. I did base the choice for these initiatives on the interviews I had with key respondents in the first round. These were respondents that had a general knowledge of the region and therefore also able to identify important initiatives in the region. I am aware of the bias that the choice for specific initiatives can have for the region as a whole, but by asking multiple respondents from different backgrounds, I think I have identified meaningful initiatives



## 5. Het Vechtdal

### 5.1 Development until now and visions for het Vechtdal

#### 5.1.1 History and background

About 70 000 years ago, the first traces of Neanderthals were found in the region het Vechtdal and about 35 000 years ago the first modern men started to settle in het Vechtdal who were hunter-gatherers. From about 5000 BC the first farmers were seen in het Vechtdal. In the roman times and the early middle ages, the landscape developed into the cities and the villages that are still visible today (Neefjes et al. 2011).

When looking at the Vechtdal area, there are different ways to look at this region. First of all there is the name het Vechtdal can be seen as the region in which the Dutch part of the river the Vecht is situated, where also its name refers to “valley of the Vecht”. In this way het Vechtdal is seen as the actual valley of the river combined with the area surrounding this river. The province of Overijssel in which het Vechtdal is situated, has also divided the province and het Vechtdal in this division is situated in the North-eastern part of Overijssel. This can be seen in the following figure.

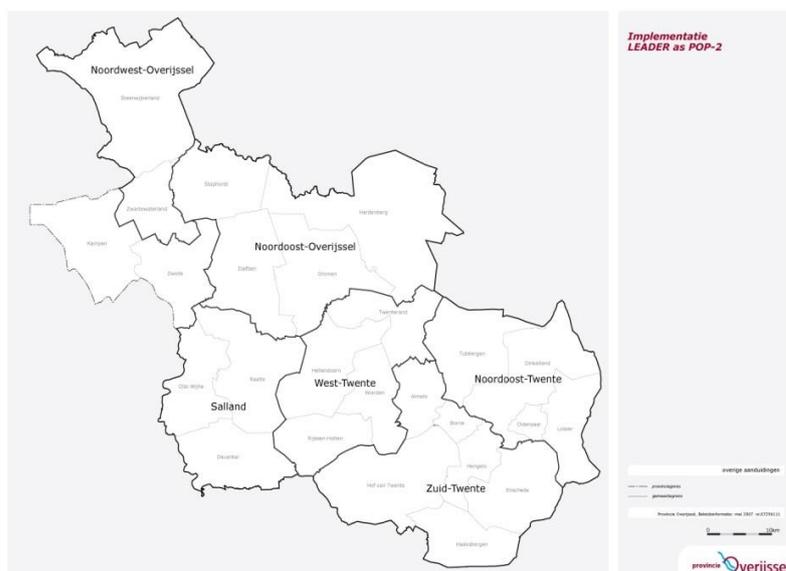


Figure 6: Provincial division of Overijssel<sup>1</sup>

This area is administratively similar to the bigger region surrounding the Vecht and includes the municipalities of Staphorst, Dalfsen, Ommen and Hardenberg with its many surrounding villages. This administrative division is also the division that I will focus on in this thesis, because this area is mostly seen as het Vechtdal by the people living in it and the respondents that I have spoken with.

The Vechtdal area has a very diverse landscape with woodlands, sand drifts, heaths and other nature types combined with agricultural lands. The area below the Vecht is mainly characterized by estates. Agriculture is still seen as an important economic sector. Data into the agricultural sector in Vechtdal in 2007 show that in het Vechtdal dairy farming is mostly practiced (78%) and in lesser numbers are arable farming (11%) and mixed farming (7%). (Corporaal et al. 2009) Next to agriculture, tourism and recreation are also important economic sectors. Recreation in the open air is common in these natural and cultural landscapes (Donkers and Immink 2008)

<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.overijssel.nl](http://www.overijssel.nl)

### 5.1.2 Visions for the region

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In het Vechtdal the province has been the main actor involved with the development of this region. The province has worked on stimulating collaboration on a regional level; a level that is smaller than the province, but bigger than a municipality. This focus has started in the 90s when food crises were on the agenda. In this time reconstruction plans were made in the Netherlands in the sandy areas where intensive agriculture was practised as a reaction to these several crises in food production. More specifically the outbreaks of swine fever were an additional incentive for the national and provincial governments to reorganize these vulnerable areas. In Overijssel this was also the case. The province was divided into reconstruction areas. Although there has not been a reconstruction commission in het Vechtdal, in all of the regions (with or without reconstruction goals), the province wanted to stimulate rural development with the region as a focus point, which was called *Gebiedsgericht werken* (Regionally focused Working). This approach was chosen, because the province believed that this was the best way to stimulate development in the regions. The local parties in the regions themselves were thought of as being best able to identify the problems in a certain area and also deal with these problems. The province worked together with municipalities, water boards and other parties in solving region-specific problems. The province believed that by this organization better results would be achieved and also because it was seen as necessary to combine different themes (social, economic and physical) in solving regional issues (Gedeputeerde Staten van Overijssel 2003).

In all of the regions in Overijssel, as well the reconstruction areas as regions which were not officially seen as reconstruction areas, commissions were set up who were responsible for the development of the region termed as *Bestuurlijk Gebieds Overleg* (governmental regional consultation). These commissions started in 2004, but are currently getting less focus from the province now that also the reconstruction plans are finished. A governmental officer of the province of Overijssel mentioned that still the regional focus (*Gebiedgericht werken*) is used, but in a different way. The province is currently thinking whether and how to approach and make use of the LEADER methodology and adapt to the new focus on Community Led Local Development from the European Union. After the reconstruction plans, the province asked the different regions if they would like to continue with working in the region and suggested that they should develop a vision and look for funding for the realization of this vision (as well private as public funding). In some regions this is developing strongly, such as Salland, which is developing a plan called “de Kracht van Salland” (the strength of Salland) In other areas, such as the North-eastern part of Twente and also het Vechtdal the province has developed a plan. In het Vechtdal this was called “Ruimte voor de Vecht” (Space for the Vecht). A provincial officer also sees that on the regional scale local initiatives seem overall to be less active in het Vechtdal. This is also further emphasized by a respondent from the organization Stimuland (a foundation that stimulates rural development in the countryside). In his opinion there are mainly sector-based initiatives in het Vechtdal and there is not a cross sectoral movement occurring in the region, connecting agriculture, tourism, government, private parties etc.

#### **Ruimte voor de Vecht**

From the 90s, a policy has been developed on how the river the Vecht can best be situated in the region. A vision for the region has been developed in which the different governmental bodies (the province, municipalities and water boards), the agricultural organisation and the nature and landscape organisations and the recreational sector have agreed on the ambition to create a “living river”. In 2009 a master plan has been developed, called “Ruimte voor de Vecht” (Provincie Overijssel 2009)

The following goals were set: guaranteeing water safety, creation of socio-economic boosts en the realisation of conservation of nature in the Vechtdal. The plan not only focused on the river, but also concerns agriculture, nature, landscape, recreation and tourism development. The plan primarily focuses on the area 5 km north and south of the river, but also involves projects beyond this area.

A provincial officer has named this project a success and dedicates this to a couple of factors. The first is openness and trust; in the past this region has had some successes in collaborating and this stimulates parties to trust each other. This also refers to path dependency. The second factor is the persons in the functions; leaders that are willing to work hard for the goals of the organisation, for example the leader of the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht. Next to that also positive energy that people can bring to their work can inspire others to commit themselves. Another factor is mutual dependence of the parties involved; all the involved parties benefit from this membership and therefore commit themselves to the mutual cause. Another factor is a sense of urgency. In the case of Ruimte voor de Vecht, this was the water safety of the Vecht, which is very evident and urgent and can bind parties and people to a common goal. A last factor is shared ambition and a plan to reach that.

### 5.1.3 Other visions

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#### *Visions from the agricultural sector*

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Next to the province and their vision for this region, the agricultural sector has been an important sector to take into account by the province. Owner of much of the land in het Vechtdal, the province was dependent on the support of this sector. As one respondent from the province has mentioned:

*“Het grote geld ging altijd naar landbouw, landinrichting, waterverbeteringsmaatregelen en dat soort zaken”*

Research by Stuiver et al. (2011) shows in which ways the agricultural sector has been involved in this master plan Ruimte voor de Vecht. In the design phase of the master plan, the agricultural sector was included. Although there was a sense of distrust among the farmers, partly attributed to unkept promises and neglected appointments, they did participate in working groups to look at the perspective of agriculture in this new master plan. In this working group some decisions have been made to meet the needs of the agricultural sector, which have later on been dismissed again. For example, the decision was made to stimulate bottom-up development through installing a knowledge broker who would look at questions coming from the agricultural entrepreneurs. This knowledge broker and bottom-up method were later on from the table again.

After these developments, in 2011 and 2012 an agenda has been set up by the LTO, the organisation who promotes the agricultural sector, in which the perspective of the agricultural sector was set out in the light of the plan Ruimte voor de Vecht. This vision was based on input of over 400 farmers in the region. Points that were made in this vision were to avoid as much as possible the loss of agricultural land, increased attention for sustainable energy, a more facilitative attitude by the local government etc. These broad set of focus points have been formed together with the farmers that have shared their opinion on the perspective of agriculture for the future and came together in the investment agenda for agriculture. (Projecten LTO Projecten LTO Noord 2011a)

The province of Overijssel has made some steps towards meeting these needs of the farmers in the region. The goals that are aimed at in the vision Ruimte voor de Vecht are seen as in some cases contrasting the needs of the agricultural sector. As becomes evident in the landbouwontwikkelingsagenda (agricultural development agenda) (Projecten LTO Noord 2011b)

*“In een aantal gevallen staat dit op gespannen voet met randvoorwaarden die noodzakelijk zijn voor een economisch verantwoorde en doelmatige agrarische bedrijfsvoering.”*

This agricultural development agenda was inspired by the investment agenda that was formed with the farmers, but goes one step further and has looked for support of other parties in the region in order to come to more concrete projects. Eventually in 2012 a platform with representatives from

the agricultural sector and the governments, was installed where farmers can submit tangible projects to get financing for these projects, called "Boeren in het Vechtdal". This platform was developed in order to give some space to the agricultural sector in which they could be supported in projects. The agricultural sector is seen by most of the respondents as the most politically supported. This province has always had agriculture on its agenda and as seen from the place in the new programme Ruimte voor de Vecht, this position seems unchanged.

The leisure sector is also represented in the master plan, which consists of parties dealing with recreation, tourism, culture and sports. This sector is mainly stimulated to carry out a cohesive storyline about het Vechtdal, in which the Vecht, the citizens and the tourists can be connected (Provincie Overijssel 2009).

The province is sometimes involved in conflicts in the region. For example with the Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (the Dutch national ecological network), that aims at connecting ecological areas in the Netherlands. The province can in a situation like this, deliberate with the involved landowners, municipalities, and water boards to see what is possible to achieve those EHS goals. The province tries to be on an equal level with the different stakeholders and to discuss the different options. In the past there have been good experiences with these kinds of conflicts according to a provincial officer. This respondent dedicates the good results to the trust there has been built over the years with the different parties.

The programme ends in 2015, which means that by then the different projects have to be finished or at least started up. Some projects have already started, other are still in the development phase. This way of regional planning is seen as an example for collaboration in a region as seen in the programme "Nederland Boven Water".

## Analysis

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Het Vechtdal already has a long history of governance and collaboration, mainly as a top-down provincial exercise. The province has stimulated cooperation between the different parties in the region and developed a programme, called Ruimte voor de Vecht. This plan covers the more physical spatial elements (guaranteeing water safety, nature conservation) as well as more socio-economic elements (tourism, branding). Agricultural interests have also been represented in the plan by assigning a platform to stimulate agricultural projects. This sector has been influential in the past and remains its influence in this plan. Agriculture is therefore still seen as an important economic driver in this region. Another sector that is stimulated is the tourism and recreational sector.

Visions for het Vechtdal thus mainly seem to be initiated by the province and executed in collaboration with her usual partners. This plan has been formed by the existing institutions and influenced by the agricultural sector, which can also be seen as an institution that has had and still has influence in this province. Other visions in the region (created by bottom-up initiatives) mainly focus on certain themes and or smaller regions. This one the one hand could relate to the lack of connection that is felt in the Vechtdal; people and their representative organizations might not identify themselves with het Vechtdal. But this could also relate to the dominance of the traditional institutions in this region. Institutions such as LTO, the different levels of governments, the water boards and the nature organizations have all been important institutions in het Vechtdal and still are partners for the province. For agency in this region this could mean that one the one hand, there are opportunities to organize in a bottom-up way, but that this is mostly in line with the structures available. Farmers can for example submit project proposals to the platform, but this is still submitted to the institutions that remain their position: LTO, province etc. There have not been any signs of bottom-up development on a regional scale that do not make use of these structures or that make room for new institutional arrangements.

The initiatives that I will describe in the following chapters focus on a certain theme or a certain region and not on the complete region of het Vechtdal. This commitment around a certain theme and/or a certain territory could also be an important factor in the inclusion of Vechtdalwide

developments. When bottom-up initiatives mainly seem to focus on these smaller territories or themes, this makes it harder to connect to the institutions that do think about a Vechtdalwide vision.

## 5.2 Involved actors and institutions

The province collaborates with other governments, municipalities, water boards, and also with Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, Natuur en Milieu Overijssel (nature organizations), Overijssels particulier grondbezit (the private landowners of Overijssel), the different estates, LTO (agricultural organization) and Marketing Oost (a marketing Organization) in the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht. Although these parties are all involved, the province of Overijssel is the coordinator and main sponsor of the project Ruimte voor de Vecht. In the 5 km zone surrounding the Vecht, parties are located whose cooperation is also needed to fulfil the projects, such as farmers, recreational entrepreneurs etc., which makes collaboration with these parties also necessary. The programme Ruimte voor de Vecht has intended to involve these parties in the decision making process by methods of citizen participation. A governmental officer also mentions days in which the local citizens are asked to give their opinion on the region and the plan for het Vechtdal. In the figure below the parties are shown who work together with the province in Ruimte voor de Vecht.

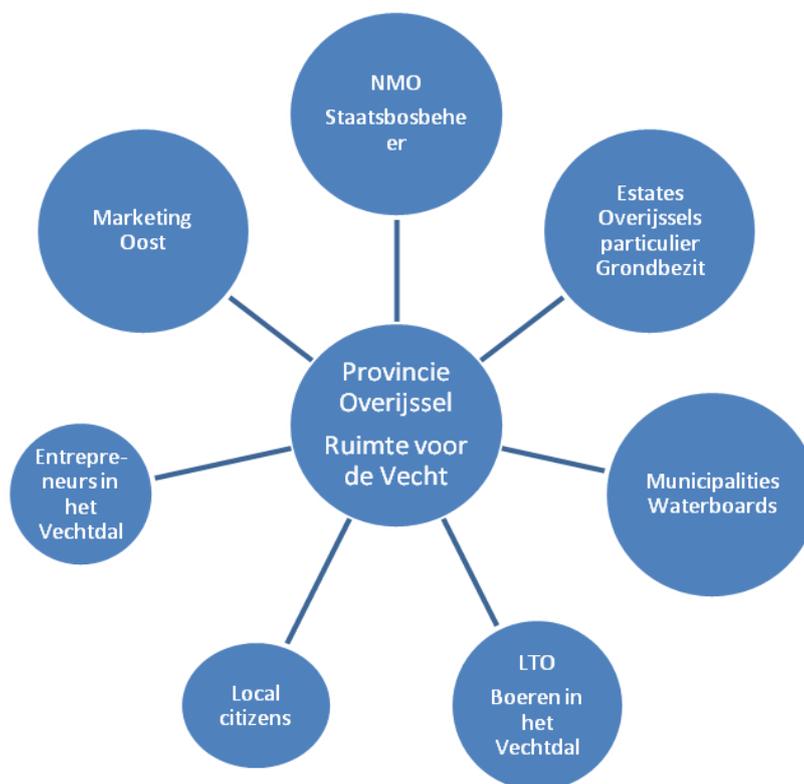


Figure 7 Network partners in Ruimte voor de Vecht, adopted from Provincie Overijssel (2012)

This figure shows as well the local government, the local citizens and also the organizations that represent certain groups of people. The bigger circles also represent a closer connection to the program. When looking at these parties the programme seems to be missing a link with parties from the recreational and touristic sector. Although Marketing Oost is involved, this party is also affiliated with the province and is mostly involved with the marketing of the region and not as much with the entrepreneurs in the region. Although the agricultural sector is well represented in the programme with LTO, the recreational sector seems to lack representation. As some of the respondents have also mentioned, there are many individual successful entrepreneurs, but they are not as much organized on a regional level. A governmental officer has also mentioned the difficulty of working with groups

that are not organized on a regional scale. These reactions also point to a lower level of organization in the recreational sector.

### *Beyond Ruimte voor de Vecht*

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Other parties that are involved in regional development in het Vechtdal are Stimuland and het Oversticht, which are organizations that work for or advise to the governments and other organizations and entrepreneurs in the region. The Vechtdal area is one of their working areas. These organizations have not been actively involved in the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht.

Other parties engaged in the development of the region, het Vechtdal focus more on specific sectors and also on smaller areas and not always cover the whole of het Vechtdal. These are first of all the initiatives that I shall focus on, the agri-environmental association de Ommer Marke and the cooperative "Vechtdalproducten. Both of these parties have had some links with the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht (mainly financial), but cannot be seen as active participants in this programme.

Next to these parties other parties involved in the region is for example Stichting Vitaal Platteland. This party works primarily in and around the municipality of Hardenberg and sees itself as a mediator between policy, governments and the local agricultural entrepreneurs. There are also some parties involved in organizing better care facilities in the region of het Vechtdal, such as Vitaal Vechtdal. These parties all focus more or less on a certain theme in het Vechtdal. There is not much cross-sectional collaboration originating as well from the bottom-up and also working in the whole region of het Vechtdal; most initiatives work on a smaller scale. The Local Action Group formed for the LEADER programme can be seen as stretching the region of het Vechtdal and also stimulating bottom-up development. At the moment of doing research this Local Action Group was not active anymore.

### *Analysis*

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Looking at the different parties and institutions, a fragmented picture arises. On the one hand there is the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht that mainly works with the usual partners in the region and what can be seen as a top down project by the province. On the other hand there are all kinds of bottom-up initiatives in the region, which focus more on their own sectors and regions smaller than het Vechtdal. It is hard to point to different visions in the region, while the visions differ on the region they describe. Although the agricultural sector has other priorities for the region, these interest have been incorporated in the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht. This programme therefore seems to bring the visions of the bigger institutions in the region together.

When looking at a lower level, to the bottom-up initiatives in the region, there seems to be little collaboration between the bigger Vechtdalwide network initiatives by the province and the smaller bottom-up initiatives in the region. Respondents have mentioned the lack of organized parties on a provincial level in the field of recreation and tourism. In the analysis of the initiatives in the next chapter I will also show that the connection from these initiatives to the province and/or this programme is limited. So when asking the question who is involved in the development of the region, this seems to be mainly a top down provincial execution. More bottom-up there are also movements, but they mostly focus on smaller regions and narrower goals and do not connect as much with the Masterplan of the province.

A factor that could explain this limited involvement is also that some sectors are not organized on a regional level, such as the recreational sector. This lack of organization could also be related to the feeling that the region is not perceived by all parties as a region yet. People may still not identify themselves with het Vechtdal. Although the region is marketed as one region, this might not be real for all parties involved.

## 6. Agency in het Vechtdal - Vechtdalproducten

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### 6.1 Background

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Regional products have been produced in het Vechtdal for some time already. The foundation Dianthus has looked in the beginning years for opportunities for farmers in het Vechtdal. The name Dianthus is the Latin name of the symbol of het Vechtdal, which will be explained in the text box.

**Dianthus**

The logo of het Vechtdal symbols the Vechtanjer (carnation) this flower was a common sight among the river the Vecht. It grows only on fine sand of the river dune. When the Vecht was canalized, the river dunes disappeared and the flower also disappeared. But at certain places amongst the river the yellow ant was active.



This ant needed a certain temperature for his eggs to hatch out. This ant therefore carries this fine sand up, let it get warm by the sun and carries it down again. Because this ant for his own interest brought this sand back up, the flower could also grow again. While he acted out of his own interest, he also helped somebody else. This represents the importance of collaborating while still enjoying personal freedom and has therefore become the symbol of collaboration in het Vechtdal.

In 2004 a Vechtdal Covenant was signed with the following parties: Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, an organic pig farmer, an organic butcher in Zwolle, a bioorganic poultry-farmer, a bioorganic vegetable producer and a vitalised water company. Other parties that joined were from educational institutes or advisory organizations who advise the other parties in the coalition.

This foundation worked out a concept with three pillars: 1) focusing on producing quality products. 2) maintaining and preserving the landscape and 3) stimulating touristic attractions. All of these factors with the underlying idea that the agricultural entrepreneur would benefit in the end. This was the basis on which Vechtdalproducten was founded. Farmers could join, of which about 20 to 30 did from different sectors. Also processors of food en restaurants joined this group in the coming years. Until 2010 this group of people mainly worked on building coalitions and fundamentals. In this phase coalitions were built with VVV, the touristic organisation of the region.

In 2009 the project Groeisprong began; this was led by the province in also co-financed with European money. This project aimed at scaling up the production of regional products and provided a large sum of money for the foundation Dianthus to work out this plans.

In this time there were different visions on how to proceed with Vechtdalproducten, which eventually lead to disagreements and distrust between the producers, which I will come back to.

In 2012 the cooperative association “Coöperatieve Vereniging Vechtdalproducten” has been set up with an external chairman. Currently the cooperative has about 20 members, all producers ranging from producers in pig meat, wine, cheese etc. Shortly the processers, such as

bakery's and mills, and the hotel and catering companies will also be tested and certified, which will lead the total amount of members up to about 40 members.

### 6.2 Visions

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In the first years of Vechtdalproducten a Covenant was signed which stated their ambitions. This Covenant was based on the constraints of the Vechtdal area that make it hard to compete on the international market. Costs in this area are relatively higher than in other parts of the Netherlands that can more easily scale up. There is a possibility in scaling up for some of the agricultural farms,

but this is seen as possible for some farms only. The solution to these higher costs was seen in asking a higher price for the products.

In these first years this group of people mainly worked on building the basis of a coalition. The goal in these first years was to implement and maintain an environmental, natural and animal friendly agrarian production system in het Vechtdal and to make and keep this accessible to citizens and tourists. This goal was ratified in the 2004 Vechtdal Covenant, signed by agricultural and recreational entrepreneurs, other parties in the chain, such as butchers, bakers etc. and “nature conservation parties, such as Staatsbosbeheer Oost en Landschap Overijssel. These parties together developed the vision that through collaborating in a regional chain, het Vechtdal and its (organic) products and services can be appreciated and valued. (Donkers and Immink 2008)

### *Disagreement*

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Around the year 2010 a difference in vision has developed between the agricultural producers. The project Groeisprong released a big amount of money from the province to Vechtdalproducten. According to the local newspaper an amount of 400.000 euro’s has been subsidized for the project that would altogether cost over one million Euros (2010).

The group had chosen not to focus on the supermarket, but on the catering and the specialist market. Three main points were focused on in that time. The first was the supply to hospitals of which there has been an actual offer running with a hospital in Enschede for the supply of dairy, meat and eggs. The second point was the forming of Christmas gift boxes; a commercial professional was also involved and willing to help sell these boxes. The last point was to supplement the products from the already existing selling points, such as the farm shops. These ideas have all been cancelled and not continued. Some members have found it too risky to continue with these big scale projects. Not every farmer wanted to go in this direction. This would mean a scaling up for the products and businesses. Some people were not able to or not willing to invest in bigger facilities in their farms to make this up scaling possible.

In this time the project that was meant to scale up the Vechtdal products, Groeisprong, created disagreement about how to handle this. Some producers do not have the opportunity to expand their production or are not willing to take the risks that come with this project. Another reason that was mentioned was that some members have felt as if some people would profit more from the cooperative than others.

In this time the vision was not the same for the members which lead to disagreements, as one respondent has said that a certain point it was not only a difference in vision, but people did not trust each other anymore.

*“Het was op een bepaald moment niet alleen visieverschil, maar op een bepaald moment vertrouwden mensen elkaar niet meer”*

The leader at that time has stepped away for some time, because his vision on the future development of the cooperative was not shared by all the members. He feels as if his active participation in the process could only damage the process. At this stage an external advisors was asked to help out, guided by his experience in these situations and later on also an external chair was asked to guide the process further.

### *Differential visions for the initiative*

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By all of the respondents, this difference in vision related to a difference in the choice for a certain scale of production. Although the first vision was about a more up scaling development, this vision is not shared by all the producers. It is based on the idea that a certain scale is essential to get some basic things organized, such as marketing and logistics. Costs that will be made in the process can then be divided over a bigger amount of products. Especially the timing was seen as crucial, because the market was seen as ready for these products. These opportunities might be taken by

someone else if this group waits too long. This vision also sees that in this phase in the market the farmers are still able to take a position, as opposed to the marginalised position that they are now believed to be in. While some producers saw this development as the way forward, not everybody was willing to or able to go in this direction.

Another difference in vision is seen in whether the activities should be handled by the producers themselves or that some activities, such as sales, marketing etc. should be professionally filled in, with hired personnel. When aiming at a bigger market, with more products, a professional who is specialized in selling products to bigger companies was seen as crucial. These activities were not necessarily seen as a job for the producers anymore. One of the respondents did not believe that people necessarily had to see his face, if the meat was proper and the people knew where to find him:

*“Ik geloof niet dat mensen per se mijn gezicht willen zijn. Als ik goed vlees lever aan de horeca en het is goed en ze weten waar ze wezen moeten, dan hoeft die kok mij echt niet te zien ”*

When the prognosis was to grow in turnover, the vision was also that a professional with a commercial background should be hired who knows the world of buyers and catering companies.

*“Zo een type heb je wel nodig anders ga je het niet redden. Mensen die de wereld kennen, van de cateraars en de inkopers.”*

Although this vision seems to fit the bigger scale production strategy another respondent also mentioned that some producers might not want to give up some of their activities, which they enjoy doing:

*“Dan laat je het iemand anders doen en je produceert meer, maar misschien vind hij het wel leuk om zelf asperges af te zetten.”*

So it can also be seen as an active choice of the producer not to take part in an up scaling process. As an external respondent mentions the tendency of these farmers to do everything themselves:

*“Dat zit in die boeren ook wel een beetje ingebakken, het helemaal zelf willen doen en zelf willen kunnen”*

### *Current Vision*

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After these disagreements, activities have slowed down for Vechtdalproducten. In the end of 2011 in collaboration with Vechtdal Marketing (promotional organisation) and Syntens (advisory organisation) a new vision has been formulated, which focuses on the demand side of the market for regional products. They base themselves on research into consumer choices, which states that consumers do not necessarily want organic, but that they associate themselves also with other values, such as taste. That is when the group started to focus more on the Slow Food principles, which are good, clean and fair food. Transparency is seen as an important value as well. An independent committee of citizens and buyers certifies the potential new members of the cooperative. This has just recently been set up, which makes it hard to already evaluate it.

With the choice for Slow Food principles, the new cooperative steps away from the certification method that was developed in the time of the Covenant, which was based on organic production methods. When choosing for a bigger scale with more professional companies, such as hospitals and catering companies, certification methods are also seen as more important. One respondent has said that two years ago the cooperative had their certification well managed, but now not anymore.

*“de grote partijen zeggen eerst, heb je de certificatie voor elkaar, klopt het wat jullie zeggen? Twee jaar geleden konden we dat wel zeggen, maar nu niet meer”*

In the new vision, the cooperative steps away from the idea of organic as it was in Vechtdalproducten. The idea behind this is that the market for upholding as well the organic label as the local “Vechtdal” label was seen as too small. The following respondent mentioned that then you are dealing with the organic farmers in het Vechtdal and that this group is too small.

*“Dan heb je te maken met de biologische boeren in het Vechtdal dus dan beperk je je heel snel.”*

Too few producers and consumers would be involved in such a market. Therefore together with the help of advisors a new vision was created in which Slow Food principles had a central position. The certification criteria now entail that the product is produced in het Vechtdal, of which the resources come for a big part from het Vechtdal and that value is also added in het Vechtdal. It is also meant to be mainly sold in het in the Vechtdal region. If there is enough supply of products, they are also willing to sell outside the region, but primarily the focus is on this regional sale.

The current vision writes that the cooperative’s goal is to act in the interest of its members, to guard the quality of the Vechtdal products and gives out the logo, to further promote the brand Vechtdalproducten and the members of the cooperative.

### *Analysis*

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The difference in vision has led to the breakdown of the initiative around the year 2010 when the project Groeisprong was initiated. This shows the importance of a shared vision, but also to a detailed extent. Although the producers were all motivated out of a belief to make regional products work, the form in which this should be done, was not clear by the members. Although some members were aiming at a bigger scale and saw the necessity of this scale, other members were not able or not willing to go in this direction. When connecting this vision difference to agency, it is evident that by lack of a shared vision, the initiative has lost their capacity to act and hereby lost their agency. And not only did this vision difference lead to a standstill in the activities, it also generated distrust among the members, which makes it even harder to get in the position where agency can be expressed again.

An element that seemed to ignite the discussion and disagreement was that the actual possibility of a cooperative focusing on this bigger scale came closer thanks to funding opportunities and a clear plan for the future. It seemed as if this was the point after which there was no return for the producers. This has been seen by some members as too risky and those were factors that led to the decision not to proceed. The intended effect of the project to stimulate the regional production has actually made the difference in vision come to the surface.

### *6.3 Practices*

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Although the cooperative was just recently formed, there have been some practices and results. First of all the formal cooperative has been formed, with a vision and statutes signed by all the potential members. Also a certification method and commission has been set up in order to adhere to the Slow Food principles. A result established longer ago that can be seen as still relevant today is that the brand het Vechtdal is seen as successfully launched. In collaboration with the local VVV (Tourist Information Office) het Vechtdal is now seen as an established brand as one of the respondents has said:

*“Het Vechtdal heeft zich wel gevestigd als een merk”*

Currently the cooperative wants to focus on the hotel and catering industry in order to make the connection between the cooperative and this industry more robust. The chairman has selected about eighteen businesses who are interested in joining the cooperative and these will follow the same

certification procedure as the members of the cooperative have. In this vision there will also be some room for coordination between the producers and the sellers. If restaurants would care for more vegetables, it would be encouraged if someone seized the opportunity and grows vegetables. So that for all parties and members, it becomes a priority to develop the cooperative and try to get it a step further.

The working plan for 2013 for the cooperative is to get all potential members certified, of which the first 15, 20 have already been certified. Secondly the communication should be improved, especially in terms of visibility through the website. This should still be developed and is not yet finished. Another aim is to get the supply and demand side structured. In this new vision, it starts with organizing things local to local which should first be organized properly, which is not the case at the moment. As a last point the link between Vechtdalproducten and the tourism and recreational sector is also seen as of great importance.

Next to the plans on the more practical side, respondents also emphasize the need for internally getting everybody in one line.

*“het zit veel meer in die procesbegeleiding, mensen bij elkaar houden, dat je ze erop wijst, hebben jullie het voldoende samen. En als het niet zo is, dan is het niet zo, dan gaat het uit elkaar.”*

First internally it should be well managed, before big scale distribution system can be set up. Vechtdalmarketing also looks together with the cooperative for ways to get these internal constraints under control. One of the respondents has also said that in all possible ways, you try to develop the enthusiasm and the will to do something with it.

*“Dus het is eigenlijk van alle kanten dat je het enthousiasme en de wil om er wat mee te gaan doen, probeert verder te ontwikkelen.”*

Although the cooperative as it is now has not yet known real successes, it was just recently officially founded, the coming years will show which plans will become reality.

## 6.4 Rural web

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### 6.4.1 Social Capital

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#### *Bonding social capital*

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The collaboration between the producers is the starting point for the initiative, long before the time of het Vechtdal Covenant. After this first willingness to work together, the disagreements during de Groeisprong have decreased the trust levels and cooperation among the producers. Although currently they are working to get the group closer together, this is still seen as in a developing phase.

An opportunity as well as a constraint is seen in the cooperation between the different members. As one respondent mentions that it is important to make sure that the members together know in which direction they are going, discuss how much space each member can take and how much freedom there still is for the individual. At the moment the producers are not in one line about these issues. The focus is still on trying to get people together and discussing what they together have. The problem is seen much more in the cooperation within the cooperative than from the cooperative to external parties. Trust is also seen as an important issue, especially when so recently this had been damaged among the producers. One of the respondents mentions the real distrust, not only to not trust each other, but real distrust.

*“Echt wantrouwen, niet elkaar niet vertrouwen, maar echt wantrouwen. Ze gaven elkaar nog net geen klappen. En dat is wel weer teruggekomen, vertrouwen, maar er is nog wel scepsis, want men heeft die periode ook mee gemaakt.”*

Therefore among the respondents, this collaboration within the group is seen as the most urgent to first get organized. If internally the members are not yet in one line, there is less need to look at the other capacities. When asked about the importance of organisational capacity, a respondent has said it is important to first focus on the internal organization of the collective.

Within this group of producers, there is also another group that has been involved with selling regional produce in a store in the centre of Ommen and recently also in Dalfsen. This collaboration is founded by the agri-environmental association, de Ommer Marke. This group is part of the cooperative, but also has their own business well organised. These producers and the cooperative share the same goals, but they already have a network of consumers and suppliers. The interest of this group in the cooperative is less clear, because of the good sales in their shops. One respondent mentions the smaller need for this collaboration.

*“die hadden in feite ook minder behoefte aan deze samenwerking.”*

Another thing that is mentioned by the respondents regarding the internal cooperation in the cooperative is that the members have been mainly concerned with their own businesses. Producers of regional products have seen each other as their competitors. When a cheese producer had found another place to sell of the cheese this was not well received by the local farm shop in town. Local food producers produce for the same market, which makes them also competitors. One respondent mentions that the people have been mainly involved with their own group of people.

*“Dat mensen toch een beetje met hun eigen clubje bezig zijn”*

Another respondent mentions the diversity of the producers and how this might affect the cooperation among them. A pig farmer has a different context to work in than a poultry farmer. It may look like a coherent group of farmers, but they are all different, which makes it more difficult to keep together.

So although this group has had a history with working with each other, it is still not seen as one group. This shows in the different groups, the ones selling their products in the local shop and also the producers who produce in their own shops. The disagreements with respect to differences in vision have also decreased the trust levels among the group, which influences the collaboration as well.

### *Bridging social capital*

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When looking beyond the cooperative, the cooperative already has links with other parties in the region. Although currently the cooperative only consists of producers, the chairman is also looking for other partners to join through certifying them, such as restaurants and hotels. Currently there already exist collaborations between producers and buyers, but this mostly occurs on an individual basis (e.g. Vechtdal beef that is sold in restaurants in Zwolle). The aim of the cooperative is to stimulate these links more and also to coordinate the supply and demand of products. The chairman sees this role of mediating between the different parties as a role of the cooperative.

Other than the links with buyers of products, the cooperative has contact with the LTO (agricultural organization), Stimuland (social-economic foundation), Vechtdal Marketing (marketing organization) and Syntens (advisory organization). These parties are in more and lesser extent involved in advising the cooperative and facilitating them on their expertise. Syntens and Vechtdal Marketing have helped the new cooperative in developing their vision. Stimuland and LTO also look at ways to stimulate regional products in het Vechtdal. These two parties have also recently organized a meeting in order to look at the potential for regional products in the region around Hardenberg.

There has also been a link with market parties in the time of the Groeisprong. The hotel and catering industry is still in contact. But due to a change in vision, the link with the bigger catering companies and hospitals is not upheld anymore.

### **Nature organizations**

In the time of the Covenant in 2004 there was a good relationship with nature organizations. In this time one of the goals was also to maintain and preserve the landscape, which was supported by these organizations. Currently the link with these organizations is not as strong anymore. The reason for this is seen in the different visions on how to conserve the nature. This hampered the collaboration with these organisations. A respondent owes this to the different interests of the nature organisation and the cooperative. This respondent mentions that they agree on nature in general, but that the type of nature is decided by people outside the region.

*“Over natuur hebben we geen discussie, maar welke vorm van natuur wordt in Driebergen bepaald”*

While both parties stimulate nature conservation, they cannot agree on which kind of nature and who should decide on that nature, ecologists or people living in the area.

### *Leadership*

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Leadership has been crucial for Vechtdalproducten. The first leader was seen as a frontrunner from the beginning and invested much time, money and energy to the initiative. In the beginning phase this leader was helped by a professional with experience in the field of regional innovation. After the disagreements this leader has stepped away from this leading position.

Although in the beginning phase, the founder started the enthusiasm of the people in the region and had the vision on which the initiative has started, eventually there were different visions which have split the initiative and made it relatively passive. The former leader of the initiative says in retrospect that maybe he has stayed too long, that he had become suspicious and people think he was only in it for his own benefits. An independent person could have been put forward earlier, because such a person will never make himself suspicious, because he has no personal stake in the process. He mentions that in another part of the process other persons should be put forward who fits with the process of the moment.

*“dan moet je op elk moment een ander persoon naar voren schuiven, die wel de capaciteiten heeft, maar die past bij het proces op dat moment.”*

This respondent emphasizes the added value of different leaders at different parts of the process. While the first leader can be seen as activating the enthusiasm in the beginning days, currently the independent chairman of the cooperative is seen as important for the current phase that the cooperative is going through. This person is seen to mediate between the different members of the cooperative and get them in one line.

The current chairman of the cooperative has been asked to chair. He has experience with working in the province and also in more social initiatives. He is seen as a connector and mediates between the different parties.

*“ik denk dat dat wel een samenbinder is, hij heeft misschien niet zo een ondernemersgeest, maar hij bindt wel samen, die hadden we misschien twee jaar eerder moeten hebben. Omdat hij helemaal niet verdacht is, hij doet het omdat hij het leuk en belangrijk vindt.”*

Now also another advisor has helped who focuses on the marketing of het Vechtdal in general and advises the cooperative. This man is seen as a process manager. By some respondents the collective nature of leadership is emphasized at this moment, more than real individual leaders.

*“Misschien is het niet echt voortrekkers, maar een trapje lager. Er zitten wat meer gelijkgestemden in”*

Leadership has thus always been important for this group. Although at the moment leadership is mostly shown by the members of the cooperative together, who are supported by a process manager and a connector.

#### 6.4.2 New Institutional Arrangements

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In the past with the project Groeisprong, Europe, the province and the municipality have invested financially in the initiative. They had a great amount of money available for stimulating regional produce. The province in particular is seen as a supporter of the cooperative in its beginning phase, as one respondent mentions:

*“Ze zagen binnen Overijssel het Vechtdal initiatief, als één van de meest vooruitstrevende en actieve organisaties gevonden”*

At the time there was on the one hand the organization Dianthus and also local shop owners with suppliers from the region who were both working on the same goals and both applied for funding with the province. The province wanted to stimulate collaboration among the different producers and therefore appointed one organization where all the applications for funding should be addressed to. This “compelling” way of cooperation has set the people of against each other. Dianthus had up scaling on his agenda, while other regional producers wanted funding for their shops. These different visions on how to spend the money created disagreement and distrust among the producers in the region, while the goal of the province was to stimulate cooperation between these parties.

Due to these financial contribution and because the project is not officially finished yet, the cooperative is not inclined to ask for more financial support. First the effects of the project Groeisprong should be considered. The cooperative is in contact with as well the province as the municipalities. Although they have contact about certain issues, a respondent does not see “a helping hand” from these parties at this moment.

#### 6.4.3 The four dimensions

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##### *Sustainability*

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Sustainability is not a specific focus point of the cooperative, the members themselves can decide whether or not sustainability is important for them. They have not set any criteria for sustainability. The focus is on financial sustainability, in order to make the cooperative financially viable for years to come.

The cooperative new style has focused specifically upon the customer. While at the moment these customers are in general not seen as interested in sustainability issues of their products, this might change in the future. From a cost-saving perspective it is also interesting to look at reducing food miles. The distribution is currently also not yet coordinated; everybody delivers its own products. This could also be more efficiently which saves money, time and is environmental more friendly.

Although it has not been said explicitly by any of the respondents, it seems as if social sustainability might be at the top of the priority list for the cooperative. Due to past disagreements and distrust among the producers, the aim is now to first get the cooperative in one line and restore trust and collaboration, in order for it too last and become sustainable.

##### *Endogeneity*

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The endogeneity dimension is very important for the cooperative. They have chosen to focus on closeness, endogeneity, character and own experience. By speaking out the quality of het Vechtdal for tourists and citizens, the chairman believes, the label “Vechtdalproducten” becomes meaningful. The cooperative therefore is actively trying to point out these qualities, but this is not something that one can command and make happen as said by one of the respondents.

The endogeneity of the cooperative is said to be situated in the complete set of products, which they try to communicate through their website and also via the hotels and catering industry. The restaurants and hotels offering the products are also offering a story about the product and its region. This endogeneity of the regional products is central for the cooperative. Criteria for the hotels and restaurants are that they know the background of the product and make sure that the story is being told. In this way a surplus value can be created. Endogeneity is therefore used in the Slow Food criteria in order to give meaning to their products.

### *Market Governance*

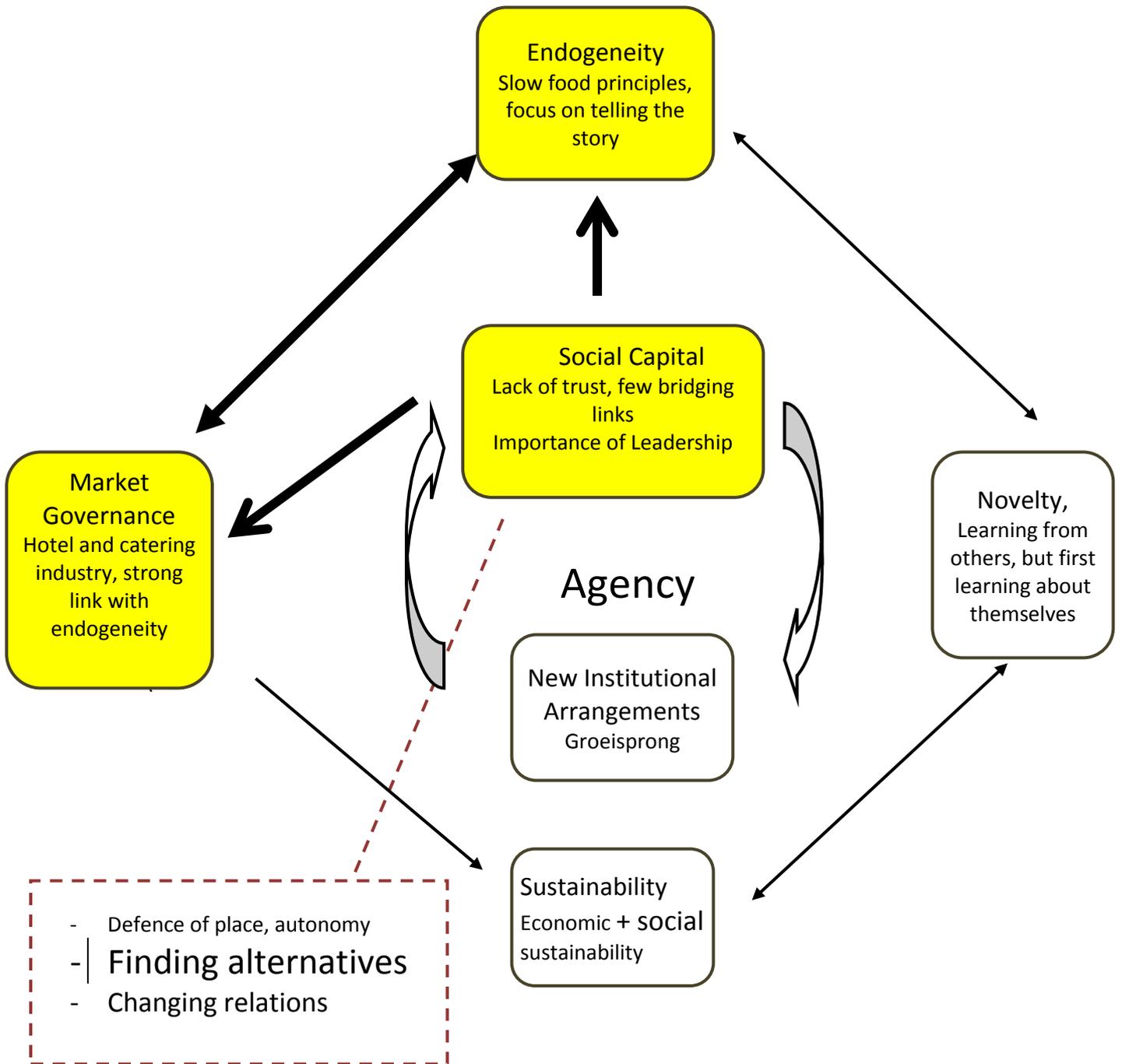
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The cooperative focuses mainly on small shops and the hotel and catering industries, because they can bring forward the story of the product. In a supermarket this is more difficult to achieve, so therefore this is not the market which they target at. In combination with the focus on endogeneity the cooperative would like to create a market for their products. By engaging the buyers of products in the cooperative itself, this market should become more accessible. At the moment though, this link to the market is not yet as developed and still a weakness in the web.

### *Novelty*

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The cooperative learns from other regions. There have been people from other regions telling about their experiences. They also learn from research that has been done about the perspective for the regional product market in the Netherlands. But next to looking at these processes outside their region, a respondent also emphasizes the process as being very much their own process. The internal dynamics are believed to be more important than implementing ideas from outside the region. The internal collaboration has more priority in making this cooperative work.



Analysis

In the previous figure, the rural web for this cooperative is shown. The main focus of the cooperative is first and foremost on the internal dimension, social capital. This is seen as the most important thing to work out before thinking about other dimensions. Especially while in the past there have been disagreements about the internal vision that have led to distrust, the collective vision and internal cooperation is the most important focus point in this time. Although bridging

social capital is also a point of focus in order to get more members into the cooperative and make more links to the hotel and catering industry, most energy is now directed to the bonding social capital between members of the initiative.

Leadership has in the development of this initiative been important throughout the years. Although the first leader has currently stepped away due to the differences in vision and the consequential loss in trust in each other, this leader has been important in the onset of the process. The current leader and the external advisor are seen as capable to bring people together in the current process. They have had experience in these bottom-up processes and can use this to help the cooperative. This can also be seen as a form of leadership; one that is very different from the first leader, but can be seen as suitable for the process that the cooperative is in now.

The institutional dimension has in the beginning mainly led to a speeding up of the process via the project Groeisprong. It seems as if this project had taken the process into a more tangible phase, which split the group up and disagreements about the further development of Vechtdal products have come up, resulting in a standstill of the group. The institutional environment at that time influenced the basis of social capital what was there. Currently the province is not financially involved anymore in the cooperative, although they do support the goals and ambitions of the cooperative. The focus though has shifted more to the social capital dimension, on stimulating cooperation and an internally shared vision, before looking at the institutional connection to the governments or to new public-private collaborations.

From the other four dimensions, the market governance and the endogeneity dimension are the most important for the cooperative and also their connection, what is shown by the arrow between them. The goal is to bring Vechtdal products to the market and promote these products and the region they come from. Endogeneity of these products is emphasized in order to aim for a specific market. The endogeneity dimension is therefore very much linked to the touristic and recreational market. By doing this, some other elements of this dimension may be underutilised. Endogeneity is next to using local resources also about the local control over these resources, which could be with the local inhabitants. By linking the Vechtdal products more to the people living in het Vechtdal, more ownership could be created over these products and the Vechtdallers themselves would also feel more connected.

Sustainability is also taken into account, although this mainly considers the economic dimension. I also think that social sustainability is very important in this cooperative. The extra attention they are now putting in the process management is intended to result in a long-lasting collaboration. Although the cooperative looks very much into research and practices from other regions, the focus at this point is primarily inwards and not as much to innovation.

So when looking at the rural web of Vechtdalproducten today, it seems as if the cooperative is currently creating the preconditions in order to be able to express agency in the future. Strong links are seen between the social capital, market governance and endogeneity dimension, as seen by the arrows. Although they have intentions on how to influence the market governance and endogeneity domain, this is not taking place at the moment and this is still a point of attention. In the past, the institutional dimension was more directly involved with the cooperative via funding, which was a factor in the breakdown of social capital and leadership. In this second attempt, the focus is first and foremost on getting the higher social capital levels, before being able to take any activities in the other four dimensions. This is shown by the weaker link between the institutional arrangements and the social capital dimension.

Overall the weakest link in this rural web is at the moment in the social capital dimension. While the social capital dimension is critical for doing practices in the other dimensions, this is the bottle neck in this cooperative now. Another weak point is in the link to the market governance dimension; the cooperative still has difficulty in finding a bigger market for their products. The institutional arrangements are not very involved or crucial in this web, so in order to improve the potential in this rural web, this could also be a dimension that could be strengthened in order to improve the relationships within the rural web.

When looking at the typologies of agency, this cooperative is mainly looking for alternatives. This cooperative is looking for an alternative nested market as described by van der Ploeg et al. (2012). Although relationships are also to be changed by looking for this market, the priority seems to be on creating a new market for products.

## 6.5 Resources

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While the previous parts discussed the ways in which agency was practised, the next part will look into the prerequisites of agency; the factors that influence the possibility for agency. These will look at human and non-human resources, schemas and possible other constraints or possibilities.

### 6.5.1 Human resources

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#### *Organisational capacity*

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One of the respondents sees a big constraint in the size and the diversity of the area. Although diversity and size can be an opportunity, in this case it is said to offer a constraint. Next to diversity in products and the big region it covers, the cooperative is also diverse and broad in its goals. Due to this diversity in goals and products, it is much more difficult to organize power according to one of the respondents. When a single goal is supported by a couple of people, it is much more clear and unambiguous. This makes it easier to organize in comparison to more broadly defined goals. In this situation people are maybe a bit more motivated idealistically than by connectedness to the initiative itself.

One of the respondents mentioned that the current goal of the cooperative has as well an economic as a promotional basis. These goals may be not easily organized together. When for example compared to standard milk cooperatives, the single goal has always been to get more money for the milk. This goal was unambiguous and the same for all the members. This one-sided goal is much easier to organize and therefore broadness of goals could be a serious constraint. In the case of the cooperative the members all have slightly different goals and perspectives and this makes it hard to bring together under the same denominator. The members often see the benefits in collaboration, but still tend to put their energy in their own business or farm. These conditions overall are seen as hampering the organisational capacity.

Another constraint that eventually hampers the organisational capacity is the lack of coordination between the producers and the sellers. If restaurants would care for more vegetables, it would be nice if someone took the opportunity and grows vegetables. If nobody takes this opportunity the cooperative is not able to produce vegetables. On the one hand it is a commercial organization, but on the other hand also a free organization. The combination of the individual freedom and the collective goals is hard to bring together.

*“Daar is een vraag vanuit de horeca en de kunst is hoe je dat gaat bewerkstelligen, hoe je dat gaat realiseren. Als zij zeggen, we willen meer groente, ja, wie gaat dat dan doen? Als niemand dat gaat doen, dan gebeurt het niet”*

Practically the range of products needs to be more diverse in order to get to the hotel and catering industry. They also miss dairy products and chicken meat. When a restaurant currently asks for chicken meat, the cooperative cannot supply. They are looking if it is possible to temporary find products from neighbouring regions who work according to the same principles, in a way that they can fill in the gaps in the selection of products.

The lack of organisation in this supply and demand as well as the diversity in goals and products hampers the organisational capacity of the cooperative. The cooperative is now also thinking about these points and also includes these in the working plan for the cooperative for the coming years.

#### *Entrepreneurial capacity*

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This capacity to organize also connects to the notion that some members focus primarily on running their own business and therefore also focus their entrepreneurial capacity on their own business. So even though the members of the cooperative are all entrepreneurs on their own farm, this does not automatically mean they use their entrepreneurial capacity for the cooperative as a whole.

This could also relate to the difference in entrepreneurship. Farmers in the region have not learned to be experts in marketing, consumer behaviour etc. That is seen as a whole different ballgame. Multiple respondents see that these entrepreneurial skills seem to be missing in the cooperative.

*“Het heeft ook te maken met dat de huidige generatie boeren nog steeds productiegericht opgericht is. Het gaat niet over marketing, consumenten enz. het gevoel dat je als ondernemer mee moet krijgen om met klanten te werken en dus echt in de klant te verdiepen, dat is ons niet bijgebracht. Dan zie je ook dat dat gedrag heel moeilijk in zo een concept heel moeilijk is. Ik vind dat heel grof gebrek aan ondernemerschap. We zouden ons toch onderscheidend willen maken, en dat kan soms met samenwerking.”*

Another respondent mentions that this could be true, but that the skills are not so much in this entrepreneurial, marketing-focused domain, but can be seen more in the domain of craftsmanship of the producers.

*“ook de bedrijfsvoering is niet allemaal wat minder spectaculair zou je bijna zeggen, en dan kun je zeggen dom of gebrek aan ondernemerschap, maar dan zit het veel meer in vakmanschap. Misschien zit het wel veel meer in vakmanschap.”*

This craftsmanship can be seen as a possibility for the cooperative. The members all have chosen to specifically focus on quality products in this region. This can work as a distinguishing factor for the cooperative.

### *Social Energy*

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There is another element that is said to be missing in this group of producers, what is inevitably connected to the fact that this cooperative is a human affair and therefore always unpredictable. One of the respondents has named this a lack of energy.

This indefinable element seems to be missing in this cooperative, but is seen as essential to bring about positive change. This respondent believes that the cooperative should give energy and not take it. And at the moment of research, he does not see this happening.

*“Maar wat ik merk, er zit eigenlijk nog een tekort aan energie in die samenwerking. Er moet door een beperkt aantal mensen heel wat getrokken worden om het een stapje verder te krijgen. Daar moet je eigenlijk vandaan komen, het moet energie leveren en niet energie vragen. Dat effect moet je hebben.”*

He sees this in the differential efforts of the different members; some people are pulling the initiative further, but others are leaning back. This is seen as a constraint in the development of the cooperative.

*“Als het niet de energie krijgt, die het nodig heeft om structureel te worden, dan moet je je ook afvragen of je op die manier moet doorgaan of dat je dat moet bijstellen. Het heeft geen zin om te blijven trekken aan iets, waar anderen alleen achterover leunen.”*

The economic achievements of the cooperative are mentioned as a potential influence on the level of energy that is present in the cooperative. This does not take away that energy levels should still be seen as a prerequisite for getting ahead.

### 6.5.2 Non-human resources

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Money and time are seen by all respondents as being a constraint and a possibility for the cooperative. It constraints the cooperative in its size and in its professionalism. The following respondent mentions the willingness of the people, but the lack of decisiveness.

*“Dus je bent een kleine organisatie met beperkte professionaliteit. Het zijn allemaal wel goedwillende mensen, maar de daadkracht is toch uiteindelijk wat aan de zuinige kant vind ik”*

Although not all respondents are fond of directly applying for subsidies, professionalism could also be reached by activating the time and willingness of people with time and knowledge. The chairman himself is also a pensioner and has the time and willingness to contribute to the cooperative. In this way little money is needed to increase the professionalism.

Although the respondents agree on the benefits of subsidies in the start-up of an initiative, it should be dealt with cautiously in order to work out properly. Although the subsidy from the Groeispromg is seen as spent well on forming the basis of the cooperative, money that is put only in promotion is seen as useless without a collective.

*“Terwijl het project de Groeispromg daar zit veel geld in, dat is benut om de basis op te bouwen, maar dan is het wel weer goed. Als je het alleen in promotie hebt gedaan, dat klinkt heel belangrijk, maar als het product niet klopt, er is geen collectief, dan heb je er ook niks aan om flink veel in promotie te stoppen.”*

There is also a need for more knowledge in the demand for regional products in this region. Although there have been studies on consumer demands of regional products for the Netherlands as a whole, for the region of het Vechtdal there is no clear picture on what the consumers demand.

### 6.5.3 Other constraints, possibilities

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#### **Constraining principles**

Another constraint that is mentioned is that the choice for Slow Food brings constraints as well as opportunities. While these principles give more producers the opportunity to join, the constraint is that the principles might be less clear to the consumers. Therefore more attention should be given to communication towards the customers.

#### **No institutional framework**

Another thing that makes it more difficult for the cooperative is that there is no clear institutional frame for the cooperative. When compared to the time of land consolidation, there were legal frameworks and a local commission. This local commission was widely supported in the region and they could and should operate in the legal framework. It does not mean that everybody then agrees, but it does mean that the work in the end is done. This structured institutional framework is seen as helpful in the process of getting things done on a local scale. In the case of the cooperative as being bottom-up instead of top down legal measures as the consolidation act prescribes, the lack of legal frames is seen as an extra difficulty.

#### **Urgency**

The members of the cooperative do see the necessity to work together in a cooperative. Some of the members have a good income for themselves and have organized well on their own also without

the cooperative and not thanks to the cooperative. They have not needed the cooperative to become what they are now. The urgency for people to join is therefore not always been as high.

## 6.6 Schemas

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### *Schema of het Vechtdal*

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Most of the respondents recognize the schemas as described in de Nederlandse Volkskarakters (1938). The following character traits all somewhat fall in the same category: conservative, awaiting, prudent and distrustful and were also recognized by different respondents. One respondent connects this to the vulnerability of the farmers; when something goes wrong with his products, they lose their income.

*“Mijn gevoel is plichtsbetracht, conservatief, wat voorzichtig en behoudend, ... Maar dat komt ook wel, dat ze zijn ook wel kwetsbaar als het met hun product even misgaat dan heb je ook geen inkomen”*

The schema in this part of the country follows a bit the saying *“Kiek’n wat wordt”* (Let’s see what becomes of it) It has something from the saying to wait to see which way the wind blows. This connects what another respondent has seen as the tendency to have everything figured out before getting into action.

*“eerst alles uitgedokterd hebben voordat iets gedaan wordt, niet gewoon doen”*

A respondent finds that people in this region often not directly speak up what they think. This might become a constraint especially when connecting to the market as one respondent says:

*“als je in de huidige markt wil komen, moet je wel soms een iets andere mentaliteit accepteren”*

Although this seems to be the tendency of the people, there are also exceptions to this rule, entrepreneurs that do stick out their necks

*“Je moet je kop boven het maaiveld uit durven steken.”*

Another thing that is mentioned is the focus on trust and valuable relationships. Relationships can be also stronger and maybe more valuable and less superficial. One of the respondents mentions the natural form of distrust with the people in this region:

*“Dan speelt de cultuur van zo een omgeving een rol. Dat er toch een soort ingebakken wantrouwen in zit “*

This affects the cooperative in a way that collaboration is somewhat more difficult to initiate. Not everybody will be easily included in collaboration. The initiation of a cooperative is therefore more difficult, but collaboration could also become more robust in the long run.

### *Schemas of the cooperative*

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Apart from the general character traits for the people of the region as a whole, the members of the cooperative also have some traits in common. They first of all have a willingness to distinguish their products. They also welcome visitors to their farms. Although other farmers in the region might

not be willing to open their farms to the outside world, these farmers often do. They are also said to not be completely led by economic motivations only, what can be seen in the agricultural sector in general. Although this also seen as slightly changing. Most of the members of the cooperative share their commitment to the product and the way this product ends up. They share their feeling for the way of farming.

*“Hier wordt ook met gevoel geboerd, heb ik het idee”*

People in general in this region might be said to be more awaiting, but this is also said to be a trait for the agricultural sector as a whole. Farmers invest their money in order to make more money. When in this cooperative it was said, that for the first coming years you will not make a profit, but it will in the longer run because you will distinguish your product, farmers were more cautious, and will not join as easily as one of the respondents have said.

## Analysis

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It seems as if the most important constraint and opportunity is situated in the cooperation between the members. This has been damaged and should first be restored. This also connects to the energy that should be created by this cooperation instead of taking it from the cooperative.

Underlying factors that can be connected to this energy loss are the ambiguous goal, the diversity of products and producers, the lack of an institutional framework, lack of professional capacity and lack of entrepreneurial and organisational capacity. A clear goal with a tangible strategy could become a trigger for the cooperative to get to actual results and to make this cooperative agentic and create the energy that this initiative looks for. I do think that this energy should be found within the cooperative, within the collaboration that has started the production of regional products in the 90s. By emphasizing mutual benefits, the producers should together formulate a way forward. A leader that can connect different visions could prove to be essential in this group.

Although the respondents have different perspectives on the schema of the “Vechtdaller”, they do agree on certain general characteristics, like awaiting, conservative and not direct. The importance of trust and building relationships can be important especially in the phase that the cooperative is now in. While the schema of the people in this region seems to value relationships and prudence, it could be good to focus attention on these dimensions even more than in another region might be necessary. The schema of the people living in this region seems to emphasize the importance of restoring the social capital in the cooperative and taking away some of the distrust in this cooperative.

Specifically for the agricultural producers commitment to the product and a willingness to distinguish their product can be seen as a common schema. This schema can be seen as a possibility for cooperation, because this has also led the producers to cooperate in the first place. This is their common ground to start from.

## 7 Agency in het Vechtdal – Agrarische Natuurvereniging De Ommer Marke

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### 7.1 Background

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#### Background

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The Agrarische Natuurvereniging (ANV) or agri-environmental association de Ommer Marke was founded in 1994 and is active in and around the municipality of Ommen and since 2011 also in Dalfsen. The association currently has about 125 members. In the beginning phase enthusiasm was great among farmers. At the time of foundation 130 farmers were members. This amount has grown to a peak of about 240 and at the moment about 125 members. The association has also set up a foundation that is responsible for the execution of the maintenance. Since 2006 non-agricultural entrepreneurs can become a member as well, but still the focus is on agriculture and also the majority of the board consists of agricultural entrepreneurs.

The main motivation for thinking about an association in 1993, 1994 was restrictive law and regulations for agricultural entrepreneurs. Due to the acidification of the soils many agricultural entrepreneurs with livestock were restricted by regulations. The idea then developed that by ensuring better conservation of the nature and landscape as a whole, there would be a more sustainable effect than by limiting this conservation to the soils. The founders of the association got together in 1993 after the discussions in the agricultural sector begun about regulations regarding the acidification and acid rain. In the end of 1993 the founders wrote a plan for an association and this included a survey which was sent to all the farmers in Ommen.

This survey asked the farmers whether they were interested in environmental issues and landscape and nature conservation measures. These surveys, which were filled in by about 90% of the farmers in the area, showed that a large part of the farmers in Ommen were interested in being involved in landscape and nature conservation.

The first project was the decoration of about 150 properties with plants from the region and also the planting of over 1000 fruit trees in Ommen and in Hellendoorn, which was welcomed from the data of the surveys. Later on other projects followed such as filters to cleanse waste water, bicycle routes and conservation of meadow birds.

In the first years of the association they were appointed as an experiment by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries (LNV), called “experiment milieucoöperatie” (experiment environmental cooperative). This status got the ANV in contact with the national ministry and also put agricultural nature conservation on the national agenda. This provided the association in the beginning backup from the national government which could protect the possible procedures from provincial level against the association. This connection to the national government in 1999 became less intense, because the priorities that were given to the crisis regarding swine fever. Later on the Ministry did come back to the association to test some systems of compensation for agricultural nature conservation, maintenance, management.

### 7.2 Visions

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#### 7.2.1 First vision

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The goal in the beginning phase was to make law and regulations more farmer-friendly which would preserve as many farms as possible. In the beginning phase this was mostly directed to the regulations regarding acidification of the soils, but also other environmental and agricultural regulations that influenced the farmers in the area were aimed at. Another goal has been ensuring the liveability of the farmers and citizens and increasing the contact between the farmers and the citizens. An additional goal was to stimulate activities that would be copied by the entire agricultural sector and that these would become mainstream.

A point that has been important in the beginning years was to find a way to get an allowance for agricultural nature conservation. A vision that has developed in the past to get nature conservation paid for the agricultural sector was “het puntenplan”. This vision envisaged that nature and landscape conservation could best be managed by making a meander of nature and landscape elements throughout the area. This would step away from a clustering of nature areas, as can be seen in many parts of the Netherland. This plan was not approved by the ministry of LNV, but the fact that they had designed this plan, did provide the association the position to later on test the compensation system as one of the few.

By being frontrunners in this stage of agricultural environmental conservation, the association had obtained a reputation with the national government. When asked if this provided them with influence, one of the respondents must admit that it has always been marginal. The reputation of the association did make the local and provincial politics interested in this way of agricultural entrepreneurship, but it has minimally influenced the association.

After this first period, the association slowly decreased its activities. This had to do with other parties in working in the region that were picking up these activities. These other parties such as Stimuland and LTO were supplied with more resources to keep up these activities to which the ANV was no real competition, being a group of only volunteers.

*“Daar kon de Ommer Marke niet tegenop als groep van alleen maar vrijwilliger”*

This was also in a time when board members had stepped out and new members joined. In these years there have also not been as many projects and activities initiated, which seems to have led to a decrease of members.

### 7.2.2 Vision anno 2012

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In 2009 a new board was appointed. The main motivation for this new board came from the changing political environment. Due to increasing pressure on land and cutbacks from governments, in as well nature and landscape conservation as for the agricultural sector as a whole, this new board wants to look for opportunities in the countryside. They have written their vision in the document “voor een blijvend mooi, leefbaar en bruikbaar platteland”, ( for an enduring, beautiful, liveable and usable countryside). The main goal in this vision is to strive for a vital countryside where she thinks that an economically sustainable agricultural sector and the conservation of landscape and nature are crucial conditions. More specifically she wants to give perspective to agricultural entrepreneurs and other landowners situated in Ommen and around to contribute to the conservation and development of a vital countryside. She realizes her goal by the setting up of projects, stimulating knowledge transfer and collaboration with other parties in the region.

This goal is subdivided into four smaller parts which focus on;

- Economically sustainable agricultural sector, with the environment and a responsible nature and landscape conservation.
- To improve landscape and nature values by the landowners
- The development of knowledge and stimulation and coordination of research regarding different management measures and their relationship to landscape, nature and agricultural development.
- To look after the interests of its members.

The association wants to achieve these goals by being open to as well agricultural entrepreneurs as other landowners. She also wants to achieve this by cooperating with parties with whom they can find mutual interests. Agriculture is seen as an important sector in landscape and in its attractiveness to citizens and visitors. By making use of local knowledge, material, manpower and boundedness to

the place, natural values and economic costs can be optimised. Financial contributions should be used for direct realisation of projects and not dissolve into overhead costs (de Ommer Marke 2012).

Underlying this vision is the importance of local ownership in the association. Keeping the lands in the hands of farmers has been an important driver for the association, according to the chairman. Still today this has priority; the association sees local people as better able to maintain the landscape. They live closer to the land, feel more involved and therefore the opinion is that local farmers and citizens will be better able to maintain the landscape. An example that is mentioned is the local control and maintenance of bushes and the timber coming from these bushes. These could be centrally managed, but locally this could be done much better, with smaller machines and the possibility to create a local market for wood, which would also save in fuel costs. Although partly based on ideology, local ownership is mostly seen as financially more attractive. Especially because much money is going to overhead costs, while there is not much left to actually do the work. When it is locally managed, the lines will be shorter and therefore the costs also lower. Then in the end more money will be left for the farmer doing the actual work.

### 7.3 Practices

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After the first project of decorating the farms with plants, many more followed throughout the years. Such as placing of filters to cleanse waste water for recycling on the farm, walking and cycling routes.

The current practices of the association involve:

- Conservation of meadow birds. They have been appointed as regional coordinator for the area Hammerfliet in a neighbouring village. In this role they mediate between the municipality, farmers, water companies and hunters for conservation of the meadow birds. The province has asked them to do so and they are also officially certified nationally.
- The sale of regional products; the association has set up a farm shop where they sell regional products. This initiative has started from the Ommer Marke and now also features a store in Dalftsen, a nearby city.
- The most recent project is “de Boer als Gastheer”, the farmer as a host. This is a network which is connected to the bicycle paths in the area which shows farms that can be visited in exchange for a financial compensation. Via this project they mean to step away from farm visits that only cost the farmer time and money towards a more professional way of organizing visits to the farms in which the farmer also gets paid for the time and money he has invested.
- The use of trimmings, they are currently working on a way to collect wood that comes from the maintenance of the natural elements to get sold on the market.

These practices work towards realization of their goals, especially to improve the income position of farmers. The projects they are currently working on more and more involve the entire Vechtdal region. The work they are doing in the Hammerfliet and in Dalftsen is outside their original working area, because they feel that the region of Ommen alone is too small.

*“je bent gewoon te klein als je alleen in Ommen werkt. En het brengt niks geen gewicht mee. “*

Practices have been on a lower level in the period before the current board has started to operate. In that time, when few practices were exercised, the association lost a lot of their members. One of the respondents thinks that fewer practices have to do with the loss in members. People also want to see results, as the following respondent says.

*“Je wilt ook resultaat zien, het kost maar 37,50 euro om lid te zijn, maar ja als je er niks voor terug krijgt, al die jaren, dan houd je ermee op.”*

## Analysis

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In the beginning years the association was mainly focused on influencing the policy and regulations for the agricultural sector. Their primary aim was to make regulations and policy more farmer friendly in the area around Ommen. By their innovative nature, the association had the attention of the national government and of the local farmers. Their member base grew substantially. In the years after, the association decreased its amount of activities and also consequentially, lost members. This shows very much the importance that is seen in being an active association. When the amount of projects decreased, the member base also decreased and therefore the capacity to act or agency has decreased as well.

The practices that the association works on and has worked on have concentrated on innovation, tourism and coordination in the region. The latest focus on more regional collaboration also shows the importance of scale in their projects. They also consider a bigger Vechtdalwide working area as an advantage. This suits very well with the vision that the province sees for the region. Although they have not invited this association in the programme Ruimte voor de Vecht, it seems as if this regional collaboration is in line with the provincial vision. The importance of practices and showing results is important, because it keeps the association alive. By showing results, the association shows agency and people want to be a part of that as is shown in the history of this ANV.

## 7.4 Rural web

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### 7.4.1 Social capital

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#### *Bonding social capital*

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Social networks, relationships and trust are seen as important in the region. The founders of the association relate to this focus in the beginning phase of the cooperative. The people that have founded the association were involved in many of the networks of farmers in the region. This is also seen as beneficial in the beginning phase of the association, as one of the respondents has said:

*“Dan heb je daar profijt van de meelopers zeg maar. Dat heeft de Ommer Marke wel geholpen. Sociale netwerken zijn in dit gebied heel belangrijk.”*

Although some of the members have been members for a long time already and are loyal to the association, the members are also connected by their tendency to do new things, to be innovative. The current members of the association are seen as people that not follow the well-trodden paths. As one of the respondents from the initiative has said:

*“Het is omdat de meeste leden van ons toch ook mensen zijn die van de gebaande paden af willen gaan, dan kom je zelf op ideeën”*

#### *Bridging social capital*

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Currently the association has links with many organizations. One link is with the LTO, the organization that defends the interest of its agricultural members, which is a big share of the farmers in the region. In some other areas in the Netherlands the agri-environmental association is founded from within the LTO, the relationship with LTO Ommen is seen as difficult as the following respondent has said:

*“Wij als Ommer Marke zijn niet voortgekomen uit de LTO en dat steekt met name de wat oudere garde nog wel. Die vind eigenlijk dat de Ommer Marke onder de LTO zou moeten vallen en dat vind de Ommer Marke niet”*

Currently the board is working to better the relationship with the LTO. A board member of the LTO in Ommen is asked by the association to join the meetings of the board of the association to keep each other informed about projects these organizations are doing, so they will not stand in each other's way. Currently the LTO seems to have obtained a great position in the region, which could have the effect that people would more easily join this organization than the Ommer Marke.

*“Dus heel veel boeren kiezen er wel voor om bij de LTO, omdat dat de standsorganisatie is, en zullen wat minder snel voor de Ommer Marke kiezen, omdat dat toch net buiten de kaders loop”*

On the other hand, another respondent also mentions that some members are members of as well de Ommer Marke as the LTO, others only of the Ommer Marke or of the LTO and other farmers are not member of any of these, which makes it hard to generalize.

*“Je hebt boeren die zijn LTO en niet Ommer Marke en je hebt boeren die vinden beide goed en er zijn er ook die niks met LTO willen en wel bij de Ommer Marke.”*

### **Vechtdalpartners**

In the beginning phase the association only worked in the municipality of Ommen. Now, the association also works in neighbouring municipalities, for example in Dalfsen. This collaboration has been brought about by LTO Dalfsen who has asked the Ommer Marke whether they would advise them in de Groenblauwe Diensten, a subsidy program in which the local government gives out contracts for landscape and nature conservation. From this moment on, Dalfsen was also included in the working area of the association. Also in the municipality of Twenterand, the association is appointed as coordinator for the region concerning the conservation of meadow birds.

In Hardenberg, the neighbouring municipality on the eastern side of Ommen, another association is active in nature and landscape conservation, Stichting Vitaal Platteland. The Ommer Marke also has good contact with this association. The associations SVP, de Ommer Marke and the LTO departments in the region together are now looking towards more Vechtdalwide collaboration. This is not seen as easy, because these different parties have different approaches to the region. With the upcoming changes in the Common Agricultural Policy, the agri-environmental associations would like to anticipate on this CAP, while other parties in the region are more awaiting this policy and the changes it will have for the region, before making plans in advance.

*“Je kunt beter nu alvast ergens mee bezig zijn, wat het misschien helemaal niet gaat worden, dan heb je tenminste een basis waar je op verder kan werken, daar zijn we het met mekaar niet over eens”*

Another important partner for the association is Natuurlijk Platteland Oost. This is an umbrella organization for the agri-environmental associations in the wider region. The goal of this organization is to stand stronger in negotiations about the developments in nature and landscape management in the countryside. Knowledge about policy and laws can be given from NPO and the other way around members of the association can raise their problems and issues to NPO.

### **Other organizations**

With Landschap Overijssel, Staatsbosbeheer and Natuur en Milieu Overijssel, the “green” organization in the region that either own land or stimulate nature conservation there are also some links. This has grown mostly in the last years and this connection has been much less intense in the past. Explanations for this increased contact are seen in the willingness to collaborate or the change of people in the organizations as one respondent has said:

*“Het is misschien ook de tijdgeest, dat mensen meer samen willen en kunnen werken, dat er andere mensen zitten, het extremisme er van beide kanten er misschien wat af is”*

## Leadership

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In the first years, the founders have set up this association, which was in a time when there were not many agri-environmental associations. Their present and past functions in organizations made them well known among the farmers in Ommen. Especially the chairman is seen as a leader in these days. He has from the start been passionate about combining nature and landscape goals with agricultural goals. He is personally dedicated to this goal and also sends out this message via social networks in the region and institutions in and beyond the region. In their first years they also received much attention from the national government and from the media, which led to a successful association with many members.

*“We hebben ontzettend veel positieve publiciteit gehad. We hadden een goede ingang naar de media.”*

*“Het waren een aantal mannen die hadden veel bekendheid in het gebied en dat heeft veel mensen aangetrokken”*

Another thing that helped were the skills that these leaders had for getting this ANV starting. In the first years when farmers applied for certain subsidies, the application form could also be used to become member of the association. This was seen by one of the respondents as a smart way to bring in members. Currently the board is made up of diverse persons, from as well more small-scale farmers as some bigger scale farms. The current president of the organization sees leadership mainly collectively exercised in the board.

### 7.4.2 Institutional arrangements

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The institutional arrangements with which the association nowadays deals are the municipality and the province. The municipality is the institution with whom they meet mostly. Next to the subsidies of Groenblauwe diensten they collaborate also on other levels. By making use of the network of the local alderman, they talk about the possibilities for the association. The association feels supported and also increasingly more involved in issues regarding nature and landscape conservation. They do not experience real constraints from the municipality. One of the respondents of the association says that although they do not always agree with the local government, at least they have been invited to talk with them.

*“Belangrijke dingen qua beleid waar we tegenaan liepen hebben we met hen om tafel gezeten. En dan ben je misschien het er niet over eens, maar je hebt het er wel over gehad.”*

Some contact exists between the province and the association, but there is not a real collaboration between the two. The president does see an increased contact with the province, especially regarding projects that cover the complete Vechtdal area.

*“Hoe breder we het aanpakken, hoe meer we met de provincie te maken hebben”*

One of the core tasks of the province is also to stimulate the collaboration in het Vechtdal. The program Ruimte voor de Vecht has also subsidized the project de Boer als Gastheer.

### 7.4.3 The four dimensions

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#### Endogeneity

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In their vision the focus on self-control is already emphasized. By maintaining and preserving the nature and landscape themselves, the association believes that this can be managed better and less costly. Moreover the income of farmers or citizens involved in these activities can also increase. This

locally managed conservation is motivated out of a reaction to the view that the more centrally organized parties who also manage nature and landscape, lose most of their budget in overhead costs, which leaves less money for the actual activities that need to be done. Having control over the lands thus still plays a major role in the vision of the association.

Other than this control the association also makes use of the resources that this land brings. The new project to collect wood from the bushes they manage can be sold and bring the association some money. Also the farm shop which they have set up makes use of the local products and qualities of the landscape in order to give farmers an extra income.

### *Market governance*

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Although connecting to the market is not a priority for the ANV, in their projects they do make use of the market, especially the tourist market. The farm shop is founded by the ANV in order to increase the income possibilities of farmers. And also the project de Boer als Gastheer makes use of the touristic market potential of the region.

### *Novelty*

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Innovation is an important reason for founding the ANV and this still is important. Being one of the first farmers engaging in organized landscape and nature conservation, novelty has from the start been a crucial element for the association. The association has also seen other associations in the country copying some of their activities, which shows the innovativeness of this association.

*“We hadden wel belangrijke ideeën voor heel veel dingen. We hadden ook een uitvinder bij ons in de club. In een andere gebied zag je opeens hetzelfde project als wat wij gedaan hadden. Zo zie je, iets wat goed loopt, dat houdt je niet geheim. We hadden er geen patent op”*

In some projects, such as de Boer als Gastheer and the filters for cleansing of water, they were one of the first in the Netherlands. Looking for innovative projects has also helped to get more members involved after the time that the association lost a lot of members. The current association also remains this focus on innovative practices. This innovative character of the ANV is mostly due to the members who themselves do not always keep the beaten track.

*“Het is omdat de meeste leden van ons toch ook mensen zijn die van de gebaande paden af willen gaan, dan kom je zelf op ideeën”*

By asking the members what they see and what they would like to change, projects arise. Next to the focus on their own members the ANV also meets with other ANVs to learn from their experiences.

### *Sustainability*

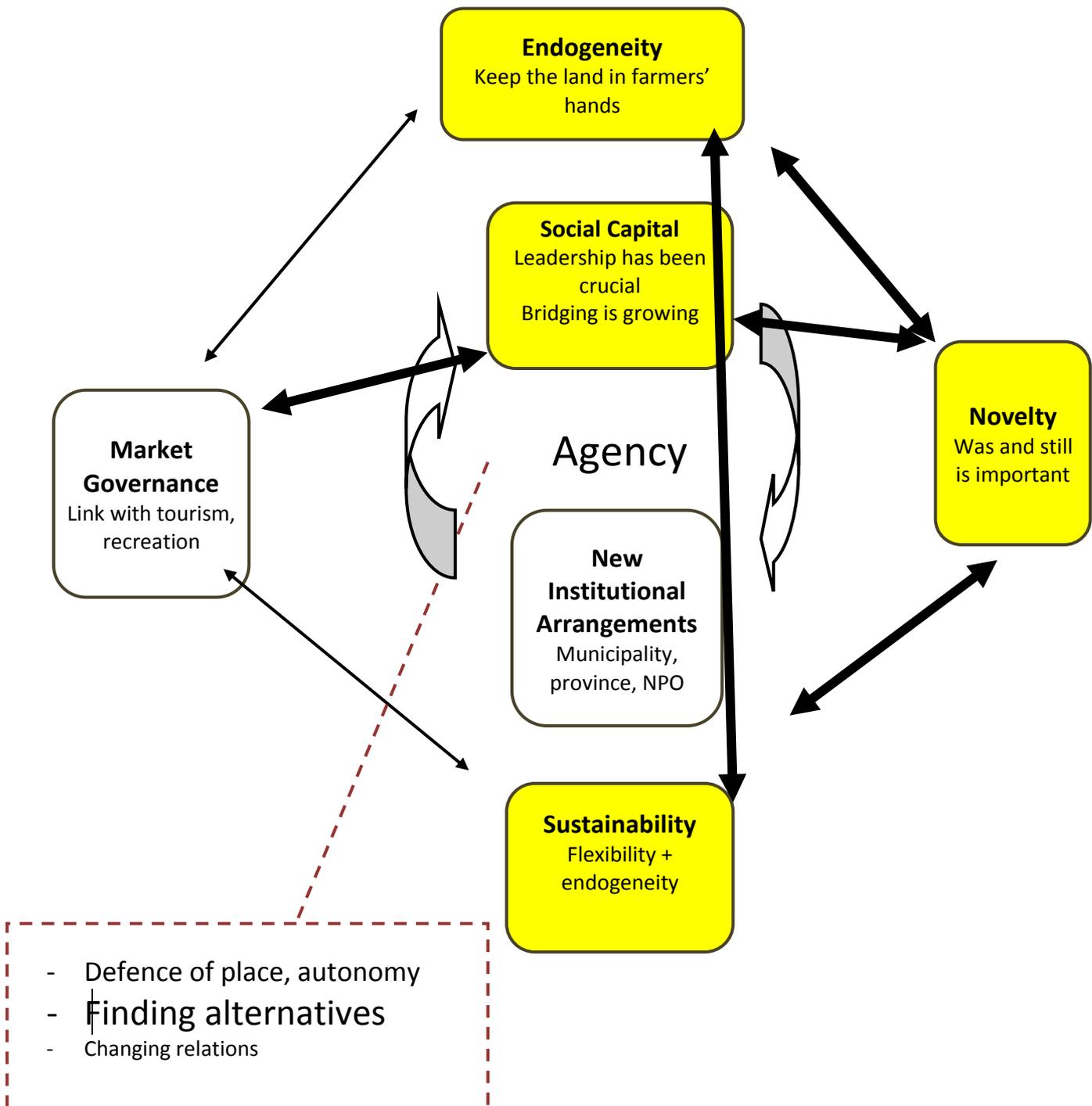
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Sustainability is for the association closely related to local ownership as was also evident in the vision of the association and as one of the respondents emphasized:

*“Als je iets duurzaam wilt ontwikkelen en behouden, dan moet je het bij de mensen in het gebied laten.”*

This does not mean that it should hold on to what was before, in a conservative way. On the contrary, in order to keep something sustainable in the long run, it should also be flexible. Just like a sustainable business, flexibility is key according to the association.

*“Niet in zo’n strak harnas dat je geen kant meer op kunt, maar wil iets duurzaam zijn en blijven dan moet daar een flexibiliteit inzitten, dan moet je dingen aan kunnen passen.”*



### Analysis

In the previous figure, the rural web is made for the Ommer Marke which shows some important things. First of all bonding social capital has been crucial for understanding the dynamics of the association, especially in the beginning phase. Social relations are important in the region and these have helped the beginning success and the enduring existence of the association. For this reason in the figure this dimension is highlighted.

It seems as if in the last years the association is also focusing more on other parties in the region and these other parties are also focusing more on the association. Bridging social capital seems to have become more important throughout the years. It could be that when the circumstances get

harder for the association, the cooperation with other parties is seen as more likely. Collaboration is also sought with parties that used to have different agendas and with whom it seems hard to find one line. The overall benefits of this bridging social capital seems to be more convincing than the possible costs of collaboration. This growing attention for bridging social capital is on the one hand born out of a necessity (collaboration can save costs), but on the other hand it could also have to do with an active choice to collaborate.

The leadership exercised by the chairman and the board combined with the emphasis on bonding social relations have helped in the beginning phase of the association. Leadership is also shown in the search for innovation which is seen in the board, but also in the people joining the association. By looking for novelty in agri-environmental nature conservation, the association would like to be leaders in the sector.

The institutional environment of the association is seen as supportive for the association. In the past, when this association was a novelty in agricultural nature conservation this dimension has been very supportive and facilitating. Especially the national attention for this association has been big. Today by facilitating, broadening their network and brainstorming the municipality supports the association. Although the province has a minor connection to the association, this role is growing because of involvement in regional projects that cover the wider Vechtdal area on which the province has more focus. Another important institution is the umbrella for ANVs in the region who supports the local ANVs and deals with more national issues regarding agricultural nature conservation.

Looking at the other four dimensions, the association has been mostly involved in the novelty dimension. Currently this dimension seems to be combined with the endogeneity and sustainability dimension. The association believes that nature conservation can best be done in a sustainable way by the people living in the area. This therefore emphasizes as well the endogeneity and self-control as the sustainability of nature conservation. In order to do this they believe that innovation and flexibility are the key ingredients. The link with the market is minor, although they are looking for ways to find compensation for their conservation work and they invest in the touristic market.

Overall this association seems to have expressed agency mainly through its good bond with its institutional environment and also the good position this association has in its social environment. The leadership of the association in its beginning years has put the association in a position in which they were very capable to act. The key dimension on which the association in this time focused was novelty. This has made the association seen by the national government and also by the farmers in the region. The amount of members and the amount of projects grew, which supplied the association with agency. After some less active years, the association has become more active again. By focusing more and more on bridging social capital and looking for new institutional arrangements with parties in het Vechtdal, they are looking for a position in which they can anticipate on the future. The focus points of agency are still situated in the novelty dimension, but is taken on much broader; endogeneity, sustainability and even market governance are dimensions in which the association is active.

Overall the weak points in the web seem to lie in the bridging social capital dimension. Although they are focusing their attention on more bridging links, this is still seen as difficult to achieve also due to the schemas in the region, which I will come back to later.

When looking at the three typologies explained in the conceptual framework, this association is mainly involved in the search for alternatives and the defence of place. This is evident from their search for innovative ways to deal with the laws and regulation and their search for new ways to make a living as a farmer, which comes down to looking for alternatives. This search is combined with the belief that farmers are best able to take care of their environment. This focus on local control can be seen as a defence of the environment that these farmers are living in.

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## 7.5 Resources

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### 7.5.1 Human Resources

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The board would like to have some more training, especially on organizational skills. The people that are currently in the board have not all had lots of experience as the founders of the association did. The people that are the most active and experienced also automatically take most of this work on them. The division of work load is therefore not always the same among the members.

Training could also improve the focus of the ANV on the most important points. Especially when in the future possibilities arise to professionalize the association as a collective, this focus is seen as important. Currently the board members do most of the actual work themselves, while this would be undoable in a bigger organization. In an example one of the respondents mentions an incident in which one of the members of the association needed help in his correspondence with the authorities. The task of helping this member was done by the board, while in a more professional organization these tasks should be delegated, according to this respondent.

Other qualities that are present in this association are first of all perseverance what is seen in the many projects that they are engaged in. Also networking and collaboration skills are growing, especially in the last years, with also connecting to parties in het Vechtdal and having the ambition to become a mediating party in the region.

### 7.5.2 Non-human Resources

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Time and manpower are seen as the biggest constraint for the association. It is hard to find volunteers and board members who want to contribute time; people are said to be too busy. Hiring of personnel could be a solution, if they had money to hire someone, but for money you need projects and for projects you need people, which leads to a vicious cycle. An opportunity is seen by working together with the association in Hardenberg, SVP, because with collaboration more can be done with less people.

The challenge has been and still is for the association to find a way to get labour paid. People are willing to invest time, but they also have their own farms. So there should be a form of compensation. One respondent mentions that nature and landscape conservation has always been connected to subsidies.

*“natuurbeheer is altijd een beetje in de hoek van subsidiebenoeming in die hoek altijd gebleven.”*

While the association thinks that subsidies should be avoided when possible and only used in the beginning phase of projects, agricultural nature conservation is still handled as an activity involved with subsidies. This is not seen as the best way to sustainably finance nature and landscape conservation. One of the respondents has said that it gives a lot of fuzz and responsibilities and when the subsidies disappear, the project also disappears.

*“Het geeft een hoop gedoe en een hoop verantwoordelijkheden en als de subsidie wegvalt dan valt het project weg. “*

### 7.5.3 Other constraints, possibilities

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Another challenge throughout the years is seen in the institutional environment. Especially changing regulations and the change in staff in the institutions are seen as constraining. There are many layers in a governmental institution and these layers also change. This makes it harder for the association to communicate with these institutional structures. Also the slow decision making process with governmental bodies is seen as restrictive for projects of the association.

*“Je hebt gewoon allemaal vakjes waar je mee moet overleggen, voor je een besluit krijgt.”*

An example which shows the direct effect of changing policy on the association is the project they set up in order to cleanse the waste waters from the farm, which was stimulated by new regulations. But while working on this new method, the regulations have become more flexible again

and the effort that was put in this project seems less necessary. One respondent mentions that nature policy and their changes resemble the 18<sup>th</sup> century painting.

*“Natuurbeleid en visies en mutaties in de visies, dat lijkt wel op de schilderkunst van de 18<sup>de</sup> eeuw.”*

In order to deal with these changing in the policy it is seen as important to have a clear vision and that this vision is regularly evaluated, as a respondent of the association has said:

*“zwalkend beleid, daar is eigenlijk weer voor nodig dat je je eigen visie helder en scherp hebt en dat je de wegen waarlangs je dat wil doen dat je dat regelmatig evalueert”*

## 7.6 Schemas

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The general character traits that are seen in the region somewhat correspond for the respondents and also fit the character traits from De Nederlandse Volkskarakters (1938). Some keywords that were mentioned by the respondents were docile and people that hear and see a lot of each other.

*“volgzaam... mensen zien en horen veel van elkaar. “*

These character traits influence the association. Loyalty to the association can be seen as an opportunity.

*“Dan heb je daar profijt van de meelopers zeg maar. Dat heeft de Ommer Marke wel geholpen. Sociale netwerken zijn in dit gebied heel belangrijk.”*

*“We hebben ook een heel trouwe kern, maar dat is dat streekeigene, we hebben er een keer voor gekozen en we gaan ervoor. “*

But in another way it can also constrain the association in getting more members. This docile schema can result in more members choosing to join the LTO, because this might be seen as the most obvious choice, while the Ommer Marke might be seen as a deviant choice.

*“In die zin hebben we daar een beetje last van dat LTO heeft gewoon een heel belangrijke positie in de gemeente. Dus heel veel boeren kiezen er wel voor om bij de LTO, omdat dat de standsorganisatie is, en zullen wat minder snel voor de Ommer Marke kiezen, omdat dat toch net buiten de kaders loop, dat idee heb ik. “*

Another respondent has also said that this does not necessarily have to be true. Some farmers choose to join either of the organisations or the association or others join both or none.

*“Je had er wel die een hekel hadden aan de Ommer Marke en je had het die het omarmden.”*

A respondent also mentions that the members of the association are seen not as the most typical farmer, they are seen as more self-willed and less obedient than the general person in het Vechtdal.

*“De meeste leden van de Ommer Marke zijn geen volgers. Je hebt natuurlijk altijd bepaalde clubs die hollen achter mensen aan, ik denk dat de leden van de Ommer Marke wat eigenzinniger zijn, denk ik.”*

This also corresponds to the innovative nature of the association and the emphasis it places on looking for alternatives and for innovative practices.

## Governmental schema

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A struggle that is mentioned by one of the respondents is the different realities of farmers compared to governmental officers. When for example the ANV is invited for an information meeting, this would cost the farmer money and time, which cannot be claimed anywhere. Farmers don't feel understood in what impact their job has on their life. The farm is always on the first place, and therefore anything what has to do with the ANV will have to wait.

*“En als je dan te laat komt is er nog onbegrip, maar als er een koe moet kalven, of er is iemand ziek, dan loopt mijn hele planning uit de hand.”*

The other way around the farmers also do not understand why processes need to go slow in the government. As a farmer you live by the day, and everyday asks for quick decision making. While in the government institutions, the focus is often more on deliberation and consultation before decisions are being made.

## Analysis

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The biggest constraint in resources for the association is seen in finding manpower or finding money in order to get labour paid. This constraint is seen as hampering the association in its projects and also constraints and overuses the people that do give in time and energy. Next to that, the board also lacks certain skills on which they would like to be trained.

Another factor that constrains the association is the institutional environment. Especially the frequent policy changes and slowness in the different governmental bodies constrain the association. Because of the anticipating nature and focus on novelty of this association, it seems logical that this would be extra constraining factor for this association. When policy measures change it seems logical that those associations that already anticipated on these future situations, will be effected mostly by these changes. And also the slowness of decision making could be seen as extra constraining with an association that would like to make steps forward and engage in many projects.

Schemas are seen as influencing the development of the association. The people living in the region are seen as obedient and loyal. This combined with the importance of leadership in the first days of the association explains the popularity of the association in the beginning phase. The obedience and loyalty is also directed towards other organizations, which makes it hard for the association to gain in members and today this also offers a constraint in gaining in membership. The current members of the association are seen as not following the traditional path and looking for alternatives and therefore do not fit the standard farmer in the region.

The governmental schemas are also seen as constraining the association. Slowness in decision making, lack of understanding on both sides makes it more difficult to organize things with this institutional environment.

## 8. De Kempen

### 8.1 Development until now and visions for de Kempen

#### 8.1.1 History and Background

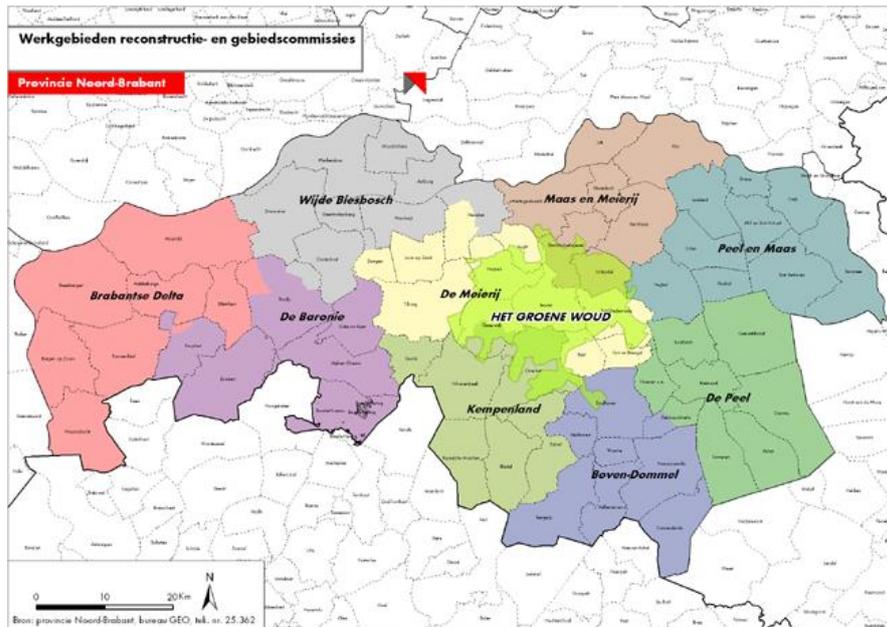
First of all it is important to make clear what is meant with the area that is referred to as de Kempen. From different backgrounds, different territories are affiliated with the label de Kempen. Its name was derived from the Latin name Campina, which means open space. In the time of Julius Caesar, people have settled in this place. As soon as they crossed the river the Maas, they arrived in open sandy fields with some cultivated areas where they could settle. De Kempen could in those early days be seen as an area stretching from the South-eastern part of the current Dutch part of Brabant up to the Belgian part of Limburg and Brabant. This area is still today often seen as de Kempen and is depicted in the picture below.



Figure 8: De Kempen<sup>2</sup>

Another division was made by the province was a slightly smaller area and had to do with the reconstruction plans. These plans were made for the agricultural areas of the Netherlands, which were involved in intensive agriculture and located on sandy grounds. Reconstruction plans were made for these areas including the area currently referred to as Kempenland, but what was called Beerze Reusel in policy terms in the first years of organization.

<sup>2</sup> source: [www.tiburgers.nl](http://www.tiburgers.nl) De Kempen (2008).



**Figure 9: Division of reconstruction and regional commissions**<sup>3</sup>

In this thesis, the area that I consider as De Kempen is the reconstruction area in the Dutch part of de Kempen as shown in figure 3. I chose to focus on this area mainly because the main development plans and visions also focus on this territory. Although there are collaborations between the Belgian part and the Dutch part of De Kempen, a shared vision has not been developed. Collaboration between the two regions is not as developed as the collaboration in the Dutch part itself. A big part of this area is made up of the Kempengemeenten. These are the municipalities Bergeijk, Bladel, Eersel, Oirschot en Reusel-De Mierden which are all located in de Kempen and that started to collaborate more intensively from 2003 onwards.

### *Regional House “het Streekhuis”*

From 2002 until 2004 there have been some pilots in the reconstruction areas of Brabant to develop an approach that would stimulate regional development in the best possible way. Reconstruction plans were initially mainly aimed at physical and spatial problems, but during these pilots, it was found that to develop these areas in a good way, social and economic needs also needed to be fulfilled. By only focusing on physical and spatial issues, some important socio-economic problems would be ignored. This broader perspective on the development of a region was the beginning of a concept that was later developed into the Regional House (Het Streekhuis) and can now be seen in other regions of Brabant as well. The development of this concept was stimulated from the province, which saw a growing need for decentralizing its tasks to lower level institutions and also in this way gives room to bottom-up initiatives, which still today are important key points for the province as seen on their website

The province saw the benefits of these pilots and decided to organize de Kempen in line with this new approach and in 2005 the Regional House (het Streekhuis) was set up. This House was similar to the reconstruction commission, but also included parties such as municipalities, provinces, water boards and nature organisations. It was initiated to work as a physical place where people could find solutions for their problems with other parties in the region. In the origin of this concept was the inspiration of Charlemagne who in 800 sat together with 100 wise men who together solved the problems of his people who needed solutions. This collective thinking process was transformed into development of regions towards sustainability, where people from different sectors (spatial, economic and societal, with a physical or a social focus) think together about solutions to problems

<sup>3</sup> Source: [www.brabant.nl](http://www.brabant.nl)

occurring in the region. This concept of thinking together towards sustainability is the core concept of the development of the Regional House. The idea is that there is on the one hand a physical place where people can bring their ideas and initiatives and on the other hand in this physical space people are present who can help realize these ideas. People that work in the Regional House also work for another organisation or goal, which makes the House a mix of provincial officers, representatives of agriculture and representatives of the recreational sector, Chamber of Commerce etc. This diversity in members of this house results in an intersectorial approach to deal with the issues in the region.

Just recently in 2012 de Regional House changed her name to het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen and now also includes private parties and educational institutions. The parties involved in het Huis also financially contribute to compensate for the loss in subsidies. There was less money coming from the provinces, which made a continuation only possible if the different parties would all financially contribute. This is a unique way of organizing, which places the responsibility and commitment with the involved parties in the region. The province and the municipalities as well as the other parties in het Huis all contribute financial and/or human resources for het Huis. The following table shows the intended contribution of the different parties in het Huis as agreed in the Agenda (Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen 2012).

**Table 4: Contribution from the different parties to het Huis, source Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen (2012)**

	Financial contribution (in euros)	Contribution in human resources (in full time equivalent)
Municipalities	€ 145.912,-	3 fte
Province	€ 245.100,-	2 fte
SRE (Collaboration region Eindhoven)	€ 37.500,-	1,5 fte
Waterboard	€ 13.500,-	-
Other parties	€ 50.000,-	0,2 fte

These resources are mostly meant for the organization and running costs of het Huis and not as much for direct funding to local initiatives. Although het Huis does provide advice and knowledge to the initiatives, the initiatives themselves are stimulated to find funding themselves. Because of this changed funding structure, parties who are involved in het Huis are also seen as more committed and this also made het Huis a demand driven structure. Only the developments that were seen as beneficial for the different stakeholders were chosen to be stimulated. The accent has changed from initiatives mostly in the areas of in spatial planning and physical adjustments towards more initiatives in the social and economic sphere. There has also been a change in the different stakeholders involved in het Huis. Where it mainly consisted of governments, ZLTO (farmers' association) and BMF (environmental organisation), in this new form also educational and entrepreneurial stakeholders are involved, such as de Rabobank and an association of entrepreneurs (Kempisch Ondernemers Platform)

### 8.1.2 Visions for de Kempen

#### Vision

Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen has developed an Agenda for the period 2012-2015. In this agenda the involved parties want to focus on self-organizing capacity. The traditional top-down hierarchy is hereby turned around into a bottom-up process in which local initiatives are central. The idea is that citizens and entrepreneurs from the region determine which projects this Agenda of de Kempen should realize. Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen aims at stimulating the ideas and

initiatives of the people themselves and does not aim at leading projects themselves, as the following respondent said.

*“Wij gaan niet zelf projecten van de grond af trekken, dat is niet ons beleid”*

The following items are on the agenda:

- Economy, labour market accessibility: *Kempen in Business*
- Experiencing nature, landscape and cultural history: *Kempen Park*
- Agriculture and environment: *Kempen Food*
- Energy and biomass: *Kempen Klimaatneutraal*
- Recreation and tourism: *Kempen Karakteristiek*
- Living, caring and liveability: *Contente Kempen*

Het Huis is structured in a way that can be recognized in a construction, seen in the following photo, that was opened in the Kempen in 2011 and called ‘d’n flaestoren’ and functions as an observatory. This observatory symbolizes the reversed hierarchy of het Huis. On the top level in this hierarchy are the initiatives and people that actually execute change in the region itself. On the second level there is room for front runner movements (koplopersbewegingen). These consist of progressive people that come together regularly to make plans and appointments in a certain theme. These movements are intended to become the start for new initiatives to arise in the future. On the bottom levels there are the different parties who are willing to participate in this structure and these come together in the regional platform. The members of this platform should represent as well the different parties (private, public, education and other social organisations) as well as the different themes of the agenda. Their task is to check on the execution of the agenda, to lobby in the region and beyond and to overall support the initiatives in de Kempen. Another part of the structure is Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen that consist of supporting personnel that helps, coordinates and stimulates all the different layers of the organization.



**Figure 10: D'un flaestoren<sup>4</sup>**

It must be said that this new structure of organizing has just recently been set up. The Agenda van de Brabantse Kempen dates from June 2012 and the first front runner meetings have yet to be planned on the time of writing. Although the Regional House was already active in the region, this new structure in which the different parties also financially commit themselves to the House has just started and its results have to be seen.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: [www.bnagebouwvanhetjaar.nl](http://www.bnagebouwvanhetjaar.nl)

## Experience with Het Huis

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The intention of the frontrunner movements is to represent the different interests in a certain theme. This representativeness is questioned by some of the respondents. The ambition has been stated that no more than two persons from governmental bodies should be in the front runner movements. This is meant to simulate other parties to join these movements as well.

One of the respondents mentions that still more and more governmental officials work in het Huis and that not as much entrepreneurs and citizens are involved in het Huis, which could slow down the processes in het Huis. This also corresponds to the amount of FTE that the province and the municipalities are bringing in the organization of het Huis as seen in the previous table.

The benefit of the structure of het Huis is mainly seen in the convenience of linking up with different parties. As one of the respondent of het Huis also emphasized:

*“Wat je ziet hier in het huis, is dat je op een heel makkelijke en laagdrempelige manier met elkaar in contact kan komen. Dus een ondernemer kan heel makkelijk met iemand van de gemeente of van de provincie. Als een burger een plan heeft, dat je binnen een half uur weet, dat kan wel of dat kan niet.”*

## Other Visions

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Although there are many parties active in the region of de Kempen, these all connect in het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen and have made the Agenda van de Brabantse Kempen in which they have stated their shared ambitions. Although the different parties involved in het Huis can differ in their interests in the region, they can find each other by looking at their shared ambitions. One of the respondents mentions the example of two different interest groups: the platform for entrepreneurs focusing mainly on big businesses (Kempisch Ondernemers Platform) and the organized entrepreneurs in tourism and recreation. Although these organizations have different plans for the region, they still started to cooperate on the issue of branding, a goal that serves both these organisations. These two parties together with the municipalities have been frontrunners in branding the Kempen and set up a logo and “the story of the Brabantse Kempen”. Also a movie has been made which shows the qualities of the Kempen. An external bureau has been hired to develop a slogan and a storyline for the Kempen, in which the slogan “Ontmoet het pure” what means “meet the pure” which refers to meeting the pure life, nature, work, living, culture and enjoying. This branding strategy aims at the tourists, the citizens as well as the potential new employees of businesses in de Kempen.

In the domain of agriculture, there are also different visions in de Kempen. Some areas are involved mainly with intensive animal husbandry, while other areas also have room for more extensive agricultural methods. Het Huis tries to mediate between the different parties, when there are differential visions about what should be done in a specific agricultural area. As one of the respondents from het Huis said:

*“daar hebben we een actiecomité opgericht tegen de uitbreiding van de IV en daar hebben we ook overleg met partijen om ze bij elkaar te brengen en gezamenlijk oplossingen te vinden. Dus zo proberen we wel de ernstige problemen op te lossen”*

## Analysis

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De Kempen has a long history in regional development. The reconstruction commission of the 90s has led to a provincial division and collaboration between parties that have evolved into a construction which still today coordinates regional development initiatives for de Kempen. Although in other reconstruction areas the regional organization is no longer present, in de Kempen, the involved parties made a new vision for this region. With a unique structure for the Netherlands, this region shows that by emphasizing mutual benefits, the region can work together. Not only are the

different parties willing to invest time in this institutional environment, they as well finance the running of this House, which is specific to this area and which shows their commitment to this goal.

The goal of het Huis seems first and foremost to stimulate bottom-up development. The agenda that was developed, mainly emphasizes the themes on which they would like to focus, but does not describe tangible plans for the future. It seems as if this Huis is primarily meant to stimulate the broad lines and the themes in which to invest in order to let the initiative and more tangible projects come up from the involved parties and local initiatives.

While this regional collaboration used to be more top-down, steered primarily from the provincial and national governments, it has changed somewhat more to a bottom-up mediating construction in which many parties from different fields come together and link up with each other. Although in the reconstruction commission there was also input from the non-governmental parties and civil initiatives, in the current situation these parties are meant to be at the centre of the organization. As is envisaged in the structure d'un flaestoren, the focus and driving power is with the initiatives themselves. Furthermore by including more non-governmental institutions in the Huis, more responsibility is given to the institutions and parties of de Kempen itself and less to the governments.

It must be said that this construction is just recently formed and that it is too soon to "measure" the impact and evaluate this new structure. What I can evaluate is the intention it has to become a bottom-up stimulating platform for the region. I do question what the effect of such a construction is for the agency in this region. It places responsibility mainly at the level of the initiatives and the parties in the region. This can be seen in structures as the front runners movements, which are meant to guide developments into a certain direction by placing the different stakeholders in a theme in one room and then hope for fruitful collaboration and ideas to develop. In this way het Huis takes the role as the facilitator and the creator of the right environment for the initiatives and other parties in the region to start "developing". This can potentially lead to the perfect environment for the initiatives, but must not be seen as the key to regional development. As seen in the theoretical framework, these structures are one side of the coin, but agency itself is still situated in the initiatives and their practices. A structure as het Huis can therefore create the right environment; the agency is still situated with the initiatives themselves. For a structure as het Huis it is therefore important to take these initiatives as a starting point in order to be of help for these initiatives. The structure can in this way facilitate the agency of the initiatives by taking away constraints and creating possibilities in this structural environment. This makes it even more crucial to start with analysing these initiatives and see how agency is expressed and what opportunities and constraints the surrounding structures offer the initiatives.

## 8.2. Involved actors and institutions

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The most central institution in de Kempen is het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. The respondents consider het Huis as a central node in collaboration networks in the area. Many people are involved in as well het Huis as in other organizations, such as the province, ZLTO, municipalities etc. These double functions are typical for the design of the House and are intended to stimulate collaboration between the different parties. These different parties are shown in the figure below. These parties all financially contribute to het Huis and take seat in the regional network, which was located at the bottom part of the structure. These parties are involved to support the bottom-up initiatives in de Kempen. In the figure on the next page, the parties in this regional platform are shown.



**Figure 11: The network of Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen, adopted from Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen (2012)**

Within het Huis there are already some parties active that often work on a certain theme in de Kempen and have chosen to also collaborate in this network organization. One of the members of het Huis is a foundation that is also involved in regional development: Kempen Goed. This foundation is the umbrella for three associations of entrepreneurs in three areas of de Kempen: Land van de Hilver, land van de Zaligheden en Land van Oirschot that focus mainly on tourism and recreation. These three associations together form an organization to put de Kempen on the map and make it more attractive for tourists. The foundation Kempen Goed aims at regional branding, food, experience and products, services. This foundation can be seen as serving the three lands on certain themes; the lands themselves are still in the lead and determine on which themes Kempen Goed focuses.

There are also the estates that have started to collaborate in the region of de Kempen, which are called de Kempische Landgoederen. This organization is a collaboration of the different estates in the Kempen and work together to stimulate the natural and cultural heritage of de Kempen. This party is also involved in the platform of het Huis.

There are also some parties that do not have the means to participate in this platform, but are asked to join het Huis in front runner movements. ANV Kempland which will further be analyzed in chapter 10 is one of these parties. Also the village councils in de Kempen are not officially included in the structure, but do have contact with the different parties in het Huis.

## Analysis

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When looking at the social network analysis it seems as if the most central party in de Kempen is het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. This network organization links up all the parties that are involved in the development of the region and works as an institutional arrangement. Although the smaller collaborations, focusing on a certain theme also cover the wider Kempen area, the network structure of het Huis tries to bring these different themes under one roof. Although the new structure has just recently been formed, its intention is to become the mediating organization in the region.

It could be questioned whether the different parties in this region all have similar input in het Huis. Some of the parties in the region, such as ANV Kempenland, are only involved in the front runner movement and not in the regional platform, because they are not able to pay the financial contribution that is asked. This excludes the smaller parties with smaller budgets to fully participate in het Huis. Also when looking at the personnel working in het Huis, it seems as if the governmental parties are still over represented, as seen in Table 1. This could lead to an overrepresentation of the governments in the network. As I will show in the following chapters this overrepresentation of the public sector is seen as restricting the initiatives to develop and can in a way constrain the initiatives in their capacity to act.

## 9. Agency in De Kempen: Kempen Goed Streekproducten

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### 9.1 Background

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Around the year 2006, the reconstruction commission Beerze-Reusel and the local associations of entrepreneurs and some experts started to think about a branding strategy for the region. This has led to the foundation Kempen Goed, which represents entrepreneurs from the different regions of de Kempen. Many of these entrepreneurs focus on the countryside of the Kempen and come from the touristic, recreational, food and services sector.

In this foundation the certification of Kempen products and services has been organized. From around 2006 a lot of money, time and energy were spent in the process of the idea of certification to the actual implementation and eventually the forming of a cooperative. In that time there was a group of producers who already knew each other and already produced and sold regional products. This group wanted to collaborate in a cooperative and together with Kempen Goed they have looked for ways to realize this idea. In this time there were also other producers in de Kempen who were willing to work towards certification. One of the respondents said that in these first years there were some entrepreneurs seen as very active and these were also the producers who eventually set up the cooperative. So in this first phase there was little attention for the other regional producers.

*“Destijds waren er wel een aantal voorlopers stevig naar voren getrokken ... dat waren wel de actieve mensen”*

This narrow scope on a specific group has widened and since then more entrepreneurs have joined. One of the respondents said that it was not right to favour some members in this process; everybody should be able to join.

*“Want je moet geen schotten plaatsen tussen partijen.”*

In the process, the foundation Kempen Goed hired all kinds of advisors and a notary in order to get the basis of the cooperative in order. Eventually in December 2012 the cooperative was founded. The cooperative was set up with eleven members. Members are agricultural producers, processors and there is also a food distributor involved who supplies to the hotel and catering industry. This partner supplies businesses in the region and is therefore also able to distribute the regional products of the cooperative. Although the preparations for the cooperative have been done by Kempen Goed, currently the responsibility and ownership of the cooperative is in hands of the members.

### 9.2 Visions

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The motivation for the entrepreneurs to set up this cooperative was the logistical advantages that were believed to come from this collaboration. The idea was that for a group of producers it is much easier to connect to the market than it is for an individual entrepreneur.

One of the respondents also mentioned the need for a certain scale in production that had been an important motivator for members in these first days to join. For this scale to be reached, the cooperative also has to think about the limits of its region. When only producers of de Kempen are included, this restricts the cooperative in its amount of producers and the eventual level of scale it want to achieve.

Although the cooperative has just begun and has not officially written a vision for the future, one of the respondents of the cooperative mentions the focus there is to generate a certain amount of turnover. This turnover is however dependent on the demand for products. They are planning to see if they can sell products to hospitals, companies and other businesses from the hotel and catering

industry. At this moment this is not yet organized in the way that they would like to see it. The goal then is, as one respondent has said, to create a sufficient amount of value on the beginning of the supply chain, for the agricultural producers; the agricultural producers should make a living of the sale in regional products. The cooperative is seen as an economic enterprise in the first place; the members of the cooperative have to make money in order to survive.

*“De doelstelling is in feite geweest dat er aan het begin van de keten, wat overblijft, dat wanneer het product geleverd wordt, dat we dan wel ons deel beuren, dat staat vast. “*

## Analysis

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At this stage of the cooperative it is still very soon to evaluate this cooperative on its vision and first developments and market benefits. What can be said is that this cooperative shows as well the bottom-up movement of the producers that are willing to make a change but also the institutional environment of de Kempen Goed foundation who has supported their goal to become an independent cooperative. Kempen Goed itself can also be seen as a bottom up foundation that was developed by the three lands. These lands have set up an institutional arrangement Kempen Goed that serves their interests in a regional level. This shows that initiatives that have developed from the society (bottom-up) can also create institutional environments that can bring different initiatives together and take a better position in the region. Because Kempen Goed covers the entire Kempen area, it becomes a partner in het Streekplatform of het Huis and probably has more to say than one of the lands would have on its own.

The vision of the cooperative at this stage is still rather economically focused. The main goal is to increase turnover for the local producers in order to leave more added value in the beginning phase of the production chain. At this first stage of the cooperative the focus seems to be primarily on getting results, supplying to the market and increasing turnover. In other words, the cooperative focuses on practices and getting to the point where it can express agency.

## 9.3 Practices

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Although they are currently negotiating with the hospitals in the region, the cooperative has not yet supplied to the bigger market. There have been some sales to restaurants in the area, for example a restaurant in Reusel where regional products are on the menu. They hope in the future to sell also to other entrepreneurs and municipalities.

An important result for the cooperative is the connection with the food distributor. This party is also a member of the cooperative and can take away some of the constraints that the individual entrepreneurs have seen in the past regarding to logistics.

The brand Kempen Goed is seen as a distinguishing brand by one of the external respondents, what is seen as important for the market for regional products. Currently the cooperative is focusing on getting independent and self-supporting. Although they have been supported by Kempen Goed in their set up, now they have to make their own money.

## 9.4 Rural web

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### 9.4.1 Social capital

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#### *Bonding social capital*

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In the cooperative there are regional producers (cheese, eggs, jams etc.), processors (a bakery and a butcher), a care farm and the food distributor. The different members of the cooperative knew each other already before the cooperative; they met on festivals and meetings with other producers of regional products. These producers have also met each other in events in the different lands of Kempen Goed.

Although the food distributor is part of a national chain that delivers throughout the Netherlands, the contacts with this party are on a more personal level, with the brothers that deliver in de Kempen. As one respondent of the cooperative has said:

*“XXXXX is een landelijke organisatie, maar wij zitten gewoon met de gebroeders XXXXX aan tafel. Die mensen zitten al een fiks aantal jaren in die business.”*

### *Bridging social capital*

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Bridging links with the buyers of regional products are made via the food distributor, because this party already has a client base in several companies. Furthermore the cooperative was at the time of writing not heavily involved with bigger parties for their sales.

Other bridging links that are not clients of the food distributor are still in progress. Although some links have been established, for example with a restaurant in the neighbourhood, this is still work in progress. There have been negotiations with a hospital and a test case is running with Kempen Goed products in this hospital at the moment of writing. These links have been established with the intermediating help of Kempen Goed.

### *Leadership*

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When in the beginning phase the entrepreneurs agreed to set up a cooperative, there was also need for a board. The necessity of a board was emphasized by Kempen Goed and in the inaugural meeting the board was formed by a voting process, in which the names of the members who were seen as the most suitable for the job were written down by the members. This suitability was also influenced by the amount of time they had available for the cooperative. Eventually three names were written down and those have formed the board. The chairman sees the leading of the cooperative as leading the board meetings, to function as a board to make the best of it.

*“Voor mij is het vooral de vergaderingen voorzitten, als bestuur samen functioneren om er het beste van te maken.”*

He also emphasizes the collective leadership of the board. An external respondent has also said that since the forming of the board that the members of this board are actively and positively engaged.

*“nou zie je ook wel dat je mensen zich er ook wel heel erg nadrukkelijk manifesteren in het bestuur, mensen zijn er heel actief en positief mee bezig zijn. “*

In the beginning phase of the cooperative a manager of het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen has been an important person. He worked for Kempen Goed and has spent a lot of hours on his “baby”, the cooperative and is responsible for much of the work that has been done in the process leading up to the foundation. He was responsible for making the first links from the cooperative to its potential market.

Another person working at het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen has been important in the process of negotiations with care institutions and currently still takes care of the certification of the products. And also a member of the Kempen Goed board is seen as important because he promotes the use of regional products in his restaurant for years already. One of the respondents calls him a frontrunner in the forming of the cooperative. So overall there have been three persons, which were seen as important in this beginning phase of the cooperative, all from Kempen Goed.

## 9.4.2 New institutional arrangements

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### **Kempen Goed**

The most important link from the cooperative is with Kempen Goed, the foundation that has played an important supporting role and still plays a role. Kempen Goed is a foundation that coordinates, advises and facilitates the three separate areas in de Kempen and their associations of entrepreneurs (Land van de Hilver, Land van de Zaligheden and het Land van Oirschot).

For the cooperative this means that they receive advice and support from Kempen Goed and also that certification is coordinated by Kempen Goed. These standards imply that the product originates from de Kempen, it is made in the Kempen, the information on the product is correct and that the entrepreneur tries to use as many resources of the Kempen area. As a guideline they have percentages for all food groups which aim at certain percentages of local sources. Certification is seen as an important element by the respondents. It shows that the products are qualitatively and formally well managed, what will increase the goodwill from the buyers towards the cooperative as one of the respondents has said.

*"Op die manier zijn wij als producenten ook verzekerd van correcte producten en op die manier kunnen we ook naar de ziekenhuizen toe, daar zijn we nu mee in onderhandeling, zodat het product technisch formeel goed geregeld is. We hopen op die manier ook de gunfactor te krijgen."*

The further support from the foundation is focused more on sketching the outlines and thinking about themes and problems occurring at the moment. An example which shows in what issues the foundation can help out is what to do with producers outside the Kempen area, who produce a valuable addition to the range of products. Kempen Goed can in this case brainstorm and discuss with the cooperative what would be the best strategy. At the moment of writing this is still a point of attention and there has not been a final decision on which strategy to uphold.

Although this supporting and advising role is very present, financially the foundation also tries to help out. In spite of the small budget of the foundation, it can try to acquire funding for the cooperative. One of the respondents of the initiative has also emphasized the tight budget of the cooperative.

*"we moeten nu een beetje op de kleintjes letten, want er is eigenlijk geen geld."*

Via het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen a subsidy is applied for via the EU Interreg project Rural Alliances. This project finances initiatives in rural areas with the goal to stimulate linkages between parties in these areas. This could help the cooperative to take care of some additional businesses, such as promotion and other start up issues without having to ask much more financial support of the members themselves.

### **Public-private arrangements**

Municipalities and provinces are first of all seen as parties to sell their products to. Receptions at governmental offices are good opportunities to promote regional products. The link with the different governments is mainly made via het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. The individual entrepreneurs do meet the municipality when thinking about scaling up their production. The local governments decide on whether there is room for more agriculture in an area. So when municipalities decide to restrict this to a certain extent, what has been happening in certain municipalities in de Kempen, the individual entrepreneur and also of the cooperative as a whole could also become restricted in its plans for the future. But when it considers the cooperative as a whole, het Huis is often the first institution to contact.

Another party that is active in the region and acts on behalf of all the agricultural entrepreneurs in de Kempen is ZLTO. When lobbying for the agricultural sector, they as well favour the cooperative. The restrictions that were planned in the municipality in order to constrain agriculture were partly

due to the ZLTO somewhat more moderated and therefore for some of the members of the cooperative more favourable. But these links mainly occur on an individual basis. The cooperative as a whole is not very much involved with the ZLTO.

### 9.4.3 The four dimensions

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#### *Endogeneity*

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The endogenous nature of the products is emphasized by using both certification methods, which stimulate the use of local products and local production methods as by making use of the region de Kempen in the form of branding. The certification criteria were set up by the Kempen Goed foundation, but are also implemented by this cooperative. By adhering to the Kempen Goed standards, the cooperative adds value to the products and also guarantees a certain quality. One of the respondents of the cooperative hopes that this certification will make the products more interesting for the bigger buyers, such as hospitals and catering companies.

So first of all, the cooperative uses as many local resources as possible, which is one element of endogeneity. Then secondly, the control over this certification is in hands of the Kempen Goed foundation. Hereby the cooperative emphasizes the endogeneity of their products by using as many local resources as possible and the control over these standards is in the hands of their supporting organization Kempen Goed. Kempen Goed does not provide any details on requirements of specific production methods. By stimulating the use of local resources, the cooperative also strives to sell typical products from de Kempen, which further strengthens the branding of the products as being locally produced.

Endogeneity of this cooperative is therefore expressed in the use of local resources for the products. The control of the standards and certification methods is done in combination with the institutional environment. This environment also further promotes the region in terms of branding and hereby also contributes to the added value of the products.

#### *Sustainability*

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The cooperative mainly sees sustainability as durability and then mainly in an economic sense. A respondent often sees that people like the idea of sustainability, but are not willing to pay the price, but as this respondent says when people are not willing to pay the price for a sustainable product, the word sustainable is of no use.

*“Als ze het niet willen betalen dan stelt het woord niks voor.”*

Furthermore it is seen as important to emphasize that the product is honest, certified and coming from the region, which will allow the producers to ask a higher price for their products, which will make them less dependent of the world market, according to this respondent.

Although ecological sustainability is seen as an option when there is more money earned with the regional products, this is not a primary goal of the cooperative and every entrepreneur is seen as free to choose whether or not to invest in this. As one of the respondents of the cooperative has mentioned:

*“Maar dat is voor iedere ondernemer voor zichzelf en niet direct een eerste doelstelling van de coöp.. Dat zit meer op economische houdbaarheid. “*

On the website of the foundation Kempen Goed, it does say that: “ Waarden als: duurzaamheid, cultuurhistorische waarden, biodiversiteit e.d. spelen rol” (Values such as sustainability, cultural-historical, biodiversity and the like, play a role). (KempenGoed 2013) <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Source: [www.kempengoed.nl](http://www.kempengoed.nl)

This role of this ecological sustainability is however not further clarified and also not seen by the respondents of the cooperative.

### *Novelty*

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Innovation and novelty are not the main focus points for the cooperative at this moment. Individual entrepreneurs are welcome to innovate in their practices, but it is not a common goal for the cooperative. The focus is first on getting started as a cooperative and getting to the market.

The link with the food distributor can be seen as an innovative way of linking producers to the market. By including this distributor in the cooperative they renew the idea of a cooperative that consist of producers only and expand it to a cooperative that also includes an intermediate party.

### *Market governance*

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Market governance is an important dimension for the cooperative. The main goal of the cooperative at this moment is to make new connections to the hotel and catering industry and to hospitals. Some links have already been made from before the cooperative was active, but this sale should become bigger in the future.

An important element which is seen as crucial to develop this dimension is whether the market is willing to buy. As one external respondent said, it is all dependent on the demand side of the market:

*“Het valt op staat op dit moment, gaat dat vliegwiel doordraaien of niet, aan de afzet.”*

At this moment the cooperative is trying to reach a bigger market for their products, but this also brings up other constraints, values and norms regarding certification and logistical issues, such as delivering packed slices of cheese instead of whole cheeses.

*“Dan krijg je dat je die producten moet verpakken in kaas per sneetje kaas vacuüm verpakken.”*

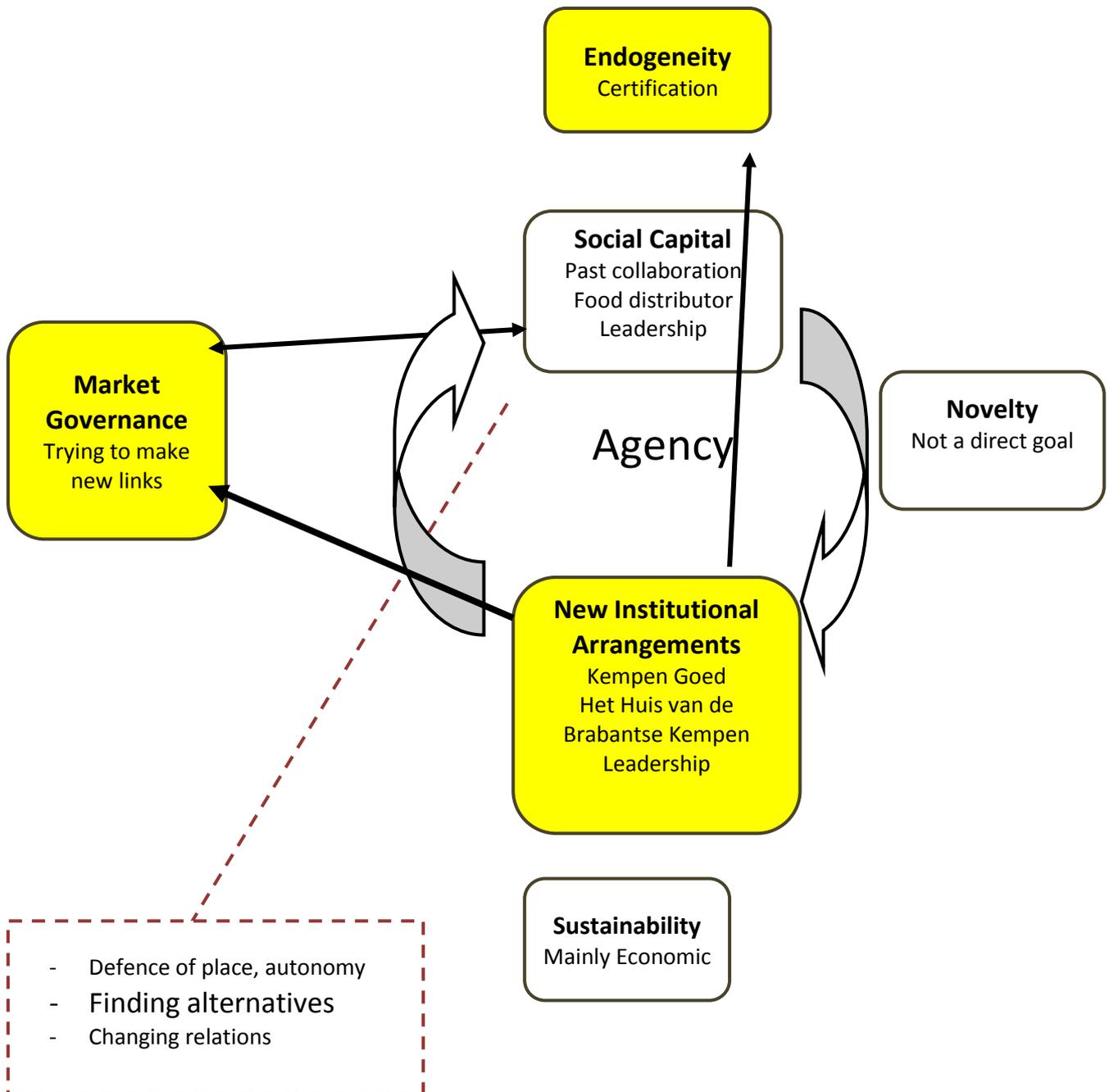
These are all new elements that the cooperative has not yet dealt with before. An external advisor mentions the importance of professional hired labour in order to get products from the cooperative to the market.

Another element that feels constraining for the cooperative in order to get their products to the market is the higher price levels of their products, due to higher production costs. The products of the cooperative are often compared to regular products from the supermarkets. As one of the respondents says:

*“Vaak wordt je vergeleken met een regulier product. Met kaas wordt je dus bijvoorbeeld vergeleken met een Campina kaas. Terwijl een streekproductkaas toch een heel ander product is, die op de boerderij van eigen melk gemaakt is.”*

Especially when aiming at the market of health care institutions, where cutbacks are not unusual, the products of the cooperative are relatively expensive. In past negotiations with a hospital in the region, the price levels have also been a big constraint for this hospital to make a deal. One respondent also mentions the difficulty in explaining the healthiness and added value of these products

*“Het is heel moeilijk uit te leggen dat het gezonder is.”*



### Analysis

In the rural web on the previous figure, links can be seen between the different dimensions for this cooperative. The cooperative is still relatively young, which makes it hard to see in which way agency is already expressed in this phase. Although the members are clear about what they want to achieve, they are not yet clear on how to do this. The actual sale of their products is also not yet to be evaluated, because there have not been any big sales or contracts. The link with the food distributor and also the connection to the Kempen Goed certification are a good basis for the cooperative to further develop.

Social capital is important in this cooperative. The group of producers had known each other from before the cooperative and also includes some active members. Although this bonding social capital initiated the start-up phase of the initiative, it has not been crucial in this first phase. The institutional environment, Kempen Goed can be seen as more crucial in this first phase. Without the support of this institutional arrangement, the cooperative would probably not be as far as it is now. Although the basis of social capital has helped, it cannot be seen as crucial. The food distributor is seen as an important link to more bridging forms of social capital and can be the link between the agricultural entrepreneurs and the world of buyers (hospitals, businesses etc.)

Leadership was mainly shown in the institutional environment of Kempen Goed and het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. One person in particular, who worked for Kempen Goed, has helped the onset of the cooperative. Kempen Goed has also financially contributed to the costs of this beginning phase. Still today the Kempen Goed foundation is helping the cooperative get ahead. Leadership in the cooperative itself is mainly collectively organized.

Although the cooperative is autonomous, there are still many links between Kempen Goed and the cooperative. The application for funding for rural alliances is also helped by Kempen Goed. This is envisaged by the lines that run from the institutional arrangement (Kempen Goed) to the other dimensions in the web.

Looking at the complete rural web for the cooperative, this can be seen as just emerging. This is visible in the few links there are between the cooperative and the four other dimensions. The links to market governance and the endogeneity dimension are mostly stimulated by the foundation Kempen Goed and can therefore be seen as very much stemming from the institutional arrangements. The endogeneity dimension is very much influenced from the institutional environment. Also the food distributor makes it possible to link up very well with the market governance dimension. The link to economic sustainability is something that the cooperative itself is also focused on and which has been the motivation for the start-up of the cooperative. Although the cooperative especially wants to focus on market governance, endogeneity and economic sustainability, these are still ambitions and not yet to evaluate. The novelty dimension is not something that the cooperative at this point is focusing on. Although the private collaboration with the food distributor can be seen as innovative in nature and not often seen in other cooperatives, other innovative practices are more an issue for the individual entrepreneurs and not for the cooperative as a whole.

This cooperative therefore seems to focus their practices on the market governance and endogeneity dimension. This is mainly supported by the institutional arrangement Kempen Goed who plays a crucial role in both these dimensions by branding of the region (and thereby also the products) and the connection to the market. Apart from the facilitative role of the institutional environment, this market governance dimension still is the bottle neck for the initiatives to show more agency. Before getting to the market, this is the weakest link in the web for this cooperative.

When looking at the three typologies of agency that were outlined in the conceptual framework, it seems as if this cooperative is mainly looking for alternatives. It is quite similar to the nested markets that van der Ploeg et al. (2012) have talked about and therefore can be seen as an alternative to the regular food market. Although there is also a focus on changing the relations from producers to sellers of products, this is mainly to get to a new market for this cooperative and to become an alternative supplier of food in the region.

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## 9.5 Resources

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### 9.5.1 Human resources

When looking at the possibilities or constraint that this cooperative faces in its practices, one thing that is mentioned by the respondents is the lack of professional capacity. Another respondent emphasizes the necessity of a proper account manager who is able to visit the professional private parties and add value to the cooperative. Someone of this profile is not involved in the cooperative right now.

*“om streekproducten van de grond te krijgen, is zelfs een noodzaak, een goede accountmanager die met kennis van zaken die professionele partijen (ziekenhuizen etc.) gaat bezoeken en gaat verwaarden. Die is er nu niet.”*

Although the cooperative currently has the food distributor who links the hotel and catering industries in their network, hospitals for example do not belong to this network. An external advisor sees that the capacity to connect to this market should be hired, although money for this hired labour is also not available. In the beginning phase there was a manager hired from Kempen Goed who arranged contracts, deals to deliver product to businesses etc. At the moment there is no money left to hire external capacity to take care of this.

One of the respondents sees that the professional capacity to market their products is also not sufficiently available in the cooperative.

*“Het zijn allemaal goedbedoelende mensen, maar het zijn geen commerciële mensen met kennis van gezondheid, toegevoegde waarde, marketing, kennis om een product op een goede manier binnen te brengen en of een range van producten binnen te brengen in zo een ziekenhuis.”*

This respondent mentions the lack of knowledge in the cooperative in issues as health, added value and marketing which is seen as necessary knowledge to market the products.

### 9.5.2 Non-human resources

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In the more tangible resources there are also some constraints seen by the respondents. A big constraint that is mainly seen for the individual members of the cooperative are the costs. Most of the members of the cooperative are small scale entrepreneurs and do not always have the means to join the cooperative. There is a membership fee for the entrepreneurs if they would like to join. Additionally, in order to become a member of the cooperative the entrepreneur must also be a member of one of the three entrepreneurs associations of Kempen Goed, which also involves a membership fee. This causes the costs of joining to run pretty high as the following respondent mentions:

*“de kosten voor die ondernemers vaak te hoog worden en gestapeld worden”*

This may cause entrepreneurs that are willing to join, unable to, because of these extra costs. Consequently another constraint is seen in the small amount of producers. Although about 90% of the regional producers is a member of one of the entrepreneurs associations of Kempen Goed, only a small group has formed this cooperative. Especially for the smaller scale producers, such as bee farmers, the costs can become a real constraint for joining the cooperative. The cooperative is also said to not have a full picture of the region and all of its producers, according to one of the respondents. There has not been a proper inventory of the regional producers in de Kempen, which could also hamper the diversity of the range of products.

In the first phase there has been a subsidy on the membership fee, but currently this is financially not possible anymore. Kempen Goed who in the past has financed many of the activities for the cooperative is also less able to organize money streams towards the cooperative, as the following respondent also emphasizes:

*“Er is niet heel veel subsidie, met cofinanciering kun je wel wat, maar dat is allemaal kruimelwerk”*

Although money streams are overall seen as a good thing in the start-up of a cooperative, one of the respondents also mentions the danger of misusing money streams. In the beginning phase of the

cooperation as well het Huis as de Kempen Goed foundation have supported the cooperative. In this period many money streams have been used. According to this respondent many advisors liked to help out at that time, but this all costs money, which could have been used for something else.

*“Heel veel adviseurs heb je die allemaal wel iets willen doen en zich inzetten, maar heel veel van die mensen en zeker die uren willen draaien, betaalde uren, dat is funest voor zoiets. “*

Next to the financial contribution, the membership of the cooperative also costs time. Time for board meetings and for the promotion of products is not always available for the individual entrepreneurs.

### 9.5.3 Other possibilities, constraints

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Another constraint flows from the choice to focus on the region de Kempen. Although Kempen Goed and the cooperative make use of the brand de Kempen explicitly, this focus on the region can also offer a constraint. When for example a producer from outside de Kempen wants to be a part of the cooperative, this is not possible. While this particular product could have had been a valuable addition to the product range, because of the boundedness of the label Kempen Goed, was impossible to include this producer. The board is thinking about these issues as well and looking at the strictness of the boundaries for the cooperative. The territorial approach seems to constrain this cooperative in its relational nature.

### 9.6 Schemas

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The general character traits from Meertens and de Vries (1938) such as unity, hospitality, helpfulness, openness to outsiders, mentality of acceptance and simplicity and warm-heartedness are recognized by the respondents. One respondent thinks that the schema of a we-feeling will help the cooperative in the future. Next to these more positive character traits, the more negative aspects of these traits are also mentioned. One respondent mentions the fact that people do not always speak up. Entrepreneurs are seen by this respondent as not open about their wishes and demands. This might relate to the emphasis there seems to be on keeping good relationships. For keeping these relationships good, a strategy of these entrepreneurs might be to not speak up their mind.

Collaboration is also often mentioned as a tendency of people living in de Kempen. The numerous institutions of the Kempen, such as the KOP, de Kempische Landgoederen, Kempen Goed, show this tendency to collaborate. This could have to do with the fact that people know each other from the past and that they are used to collaborate as one of the respondents also emphasizes. Although some of the respondents have mentioned this collaborative nature to be a typical trait for Brabant as a whole, another respondent question this trait to be of the whole province and attributes it only to de Kempen.

#### **Governmental schema**

Another difference in schema is seen between the entrepreneurs and the governments. One respondent thinks that the governmental attitude restrains processes in the cooperative.

*“Ik denk dat die ambtelijke invloed een stroperige remmerige werking heeft op dit soort processen.”*

He emphasizes the difference in focus; while for a private entrepreneur costs need to be minimized at all times, for governmental officers this is seen as less urgent:

*“die staan niet op met wat is vandaag de kostprijs en hoe krijg ik die verder omlaag, want dat is belangrijk voor de organisatie en die organisatie moet elke dag strak staan. Daar hebben hun een andere kijk op. Daar zijn ze niet mee bezig, wordt ook niet van hun gevraagd. “*

This less business-like attitude will according to this respondent constrain the cooperative when trying to connect to the bigger parties in the market. To be able to overcome this, the cooperative should have knowledge of this market and be capable to interact with these parties. This respondent experiences a gap between this attitude and the market at which the cooperative is aiming at. He also is in favour of bringing in more people from private parties and less governmental officials.

*“En die mentaliteit die we hier in het bedrijf hebben, keiharde doelstellingen, mensen worden beoordeeld, afgerekend, die mentaliteit zit er nog helemaal niet. En die zakelijke inslag moet er wel inkomen. Vandaar dat er minder ambtelijk bloed in moet en meer zakelijk bloed, wil je dat niveau gaan halen.”*

This respondent also mentions het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen as being too much involved with people from governments, which has the danger to work constraining on processes like the cooperative. This notion is shared by more respondents. Also due to the youthfulness of the cooperative, it is hard to already evaluate this effect. Two of the respondents have also mentioned the overrepresentation of governmental officers in het Huis, which is also represented in table 4.

## Analysis

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When looking at this young cooperative, most of the constraints connect to the start-up of an initiative. The most important might be that there is not yet a robust connection to the market for the products of the cooperative. Although there seems to be potential, this has not yet led to contracts with bigger parties.

This is also connected to the big constraint in time, manpower, professional capacity and a resource that could take care of that all: money. In the past, a professional has been hired to take care of these resources, but due to lack of money, there is no room left for hiring in of personnel.

Other smaller constraints are seen in the limited amount of producers for the cooperative. This can on the one hand have something to do with the boundedness of the region, which next to a distinguishing element also constraints the cooperative in its access to more producers. This could also be due to an insufficient overview of what is already there in the region. This issue of boundedness also reflects the dilemma of a relational versus a territorial approach. In this case the boundaries around the Kempen provide constraints in terms of access for producers. The supply of products and therefore the product range could have been increased when these boundaries were not as strict.

The collaborative nature of de Kempen is often emphasized by the respondents. This also raises the question whether this image of the people in de Kempen is based on their experiences or that this collaborative nature is something that is repeated so often, that it becomes common knowledge for the people in the Kempen. Although I do believe that the people in de Kempen are collaborative in their nature, as seen in their many collaborative institutions, this should not be seen as a given fact, but must be shown from actual practices and experiences.

A more negative schema that was mentioned by the respondents was that people do not always speak up their mind. This could also have to do with the emphasis on keeping good relationships. In this way, higher amounts of social capital and a denser network of relationships could lead to less open communication and in this way also constrain the agency of an initiative.

Another gap is seen between the business-like attitude and the governmental attitude. This gap is seen as having a restraining effect on the functioning of the cooperative. The question could be whether the entrepreneurs in the cooperative are seen as capable of dealing with the bigger market parties.

At this moment the cooperative has taken and has been given the responsibility for the cooperative; they are on their own now. But although the official responsibility is in the hands of the cooperative, I think that the influence of Kempen Goed and het Huis is substantial. The future will

show whether the cooperative keeps control over the decision making and in this way can make use of the institutional environment and increase its agency.

## 10. Agency in De Kempen: Agrarische Natuurvereniging Kempenland

### 10.1 Background

The Agrarische Natuurvereniging (ANV) or agri-environmental association Kempenland is founded on the first of October 2009. This association stimulates the conservation of the landscape in the Kempen by supporting farmers and citizens to take care of the landscape and nature around them. The association is active in the region as sketched below and covers approximately the same area as the reconstruction area Kempenland.

The association is open for as well entrepreneurs (agricultural or other) and citizens. It organizes meetings in which the new plans and opportunities can be sketched for nature and landscape in de Kempen and in which it tries to acquire new members.



Figure 12: Working area of the association<sup>6</sup>

### 10.2 Visions

The motivation to set up an agri-environmental organization came up in 2008. In this time there were some developments in nature and landscape management around the area de Beerze. Certain agricultural lands that were being turned into natural lands and the local departments of ZLTO Eersel-Veldhoven and ZLTO Bladel anticipated on this. They wanted to set up an organization that would play a role in the conservation of these natural lands, in order to keep these lands more or less in the hands of the agricultural sector. While it started with these two departments of ZLTO, later on

<sup>6</sup> Source [www.anvkempenland.nl](http://www.anvkempenland.nl)

other ZLTO departments in the region joined. Besides this local control of the lands, another important motivation was to work on the relationship between the farmers and the citizens in the area and to improve the reputation of the agricultural sector.

This process was stimulated by the central ZLTO organization, who had noticed that there was not yet a regional association in de Kempen. In the initial phase of the ANV, the boards of the different ZLTO departments constituted the board of the ANV, but later these people have looked for people in the regions themselves to be part of the ANV board who form the board up to today.

## Vision

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The association has set up a vision which is published on their website in which she sees a growing attention for nature and landscape on the political and societal agenda. They see this as an opportunity for the agricultural sector. The association is said to look for a way to on the one hand anticipate on the needs of society and on the other hand contribute to the farm income. They think that if the people take up these tasks themselves, that they will also feel responsible for nature and landscape in their surroundings.

*“ze voelen zich ook hoeders van de natuur, om daar ook een rol in te spelen.”*

Farmers in the area mostly the owners of the lands where nature and landscape can be realised and therefore maintenance of these lands could best be done by these farmers. This is seen as the best way, when it would become financially attractive for farmers to engage in nature and landscape conservation. Farmers engaging in nature and landscape conservation could by doing this improve the image of agriculture. The second positive thing about farmers picking up these tasks is that they have knowledge of the area and therefore will be better able to execute this work. The last benefit is seen in the surplus it can generate on the income of the farmer.

The association sees itself in this vision as the central node between different parties involved in nature and landscape conservation as a key mediator between nature lovers, owners of land, citizens and governments. They especially see a growing role in the coming Common Agricultural Policy, in which it seems that nature and landscape conservation would be primarily funded through collectives.

The opportunities are mostly seen in the lands which are less appropriate for large scale farming, where frog pools and wooded banks could be created. Another focus point is improving the natural elements which need maintenance in the area. A last point of attention is the maintenance of nature and landscape on the farms.

## Analysis

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This association with a relatively short history has set up a vision in which she sees a bigger role for agriculture in the conservation of landscape and nature in de Kempen. Developed from local ZLTO departments and supported by the central ZLTO department, this association was set up for as well farmers as non-farmers.

What is somewhat confusing in their vision is that on the one hand, it is very much steered from the agricultural sector; the ZLTO departments have been involved from the start of the association. But on the other hand she also welcomes other entrepreneurs and citizens. For me it seems as if the target group is not really clear. Although their goals seem to be mainly focused on farmers by improving the image of farmers, increasing the income base for farmers and using the knowledge of farmers, the role of non-farmers seems less clear. This could have potential negative effects on the attractiveness for non-farmers to get involved.

## 10.3 Practices

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The first activity that was taken on by the ANV was het Stimuleringskader Groenblauwe diensten (Stika), a project in which the province has given out contracts with the municipalities for

management of nature and the landscape. The municipalities in de Kempen are making use of this arrangement and is outsourcing the Stika to the ANV. They have appointed a field coordinator who is involved in this arrangement with the ANV. In the beginning years, the association has hired help from a consultancy and now Brabants Landschap (an organization that stimulates nature and landscape conservation throughout Brabant) advises the ANV. The association has chosen to focus in the beginning phase on the execution of this Stika in order to swiftly get going. This would also give the association a way to show what they were about, as one of the respondents said:

*“Toen konden we aan de buitenwereld laten zien, dit hebben we in handen het is iets praktisch en dan hoef je geen lucht te gaan verkopen”*

Just over one million Euros were available for improving nature and landscape in de Kempen of which the most part is reserved for the people executing the work (Huis van de Brabantse Kempen 2010). There is also a part in overhead costs, of which the coordinator and the costs for the ANV are paid. Projects that are being executed range from the building of bicycle and walking paths, maintaining nature reserves, developing landscape elements to the planning of excursions.

Although the municipalities are showing more and more interest in collaborating with the association, the current practices are mainly steered by het Stika. Due to the short time that the association has been running, they have not had many results as the following respondent said:

*“Ze hebben door de jongheid nog weinig resultaten, dus dat moet groeien, maar dat begint te komen.”*

## 10.4 Rural web

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### 10.4.1 Social capital

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#### *Bonding social capital*

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The board of the association is made up of farmers as well as citizens: the total amount of members is 40 to 45. These people knew each other already before the start of the association.

Of the totality of farmers in de Kempen only a small part is a member of the association. Although there are more farmers working in nature and landscape management, these are not all members of the ANV. One respondent mentions that due to its youthfulness the association might be relatively unknown and therefore not has as many members yet.

*“De ANV heeft nog niet zoveel leden, dat is een vrij jonge club, misschien geldt onbekend maakt onbemind.”*

Most of the members are farmers involved in multifunctional or in soil-bound agriculture. These entrepreneurs are already more open to multifunctionality or can more easily incorporate nature and landscape management in their business models. Almost no entrepreneurs from the more intensive sectors are involved.

#### *Bridging social capital*

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Because the association has focused mostly on the execution of het Stika, the connections they made with other parties also relate to this. Therefore they are in contact with het Brabants Landschap and with the municipalities. Here again the youthfulness of the association is mentioned as a reason for the small amount of links.

*“We steken onze voelsprietten uit en met allerlei clubs zijn we bezig.”*

Other parties that the ANV collaborates with are nature organizations, such as an organization for the conservation of meadow birds and IVN (Institute for Nature Education en Sustainability). In its vision the ANV would like to take up a coordinating role in de Kempen and this still is an ambition. In two places the ANV has an area where they have agreed with the involved parties to coordinate the conservation of the meadow birds

The link that is seen as underdeveloped according to multiple respondents is from the ANV to the agricultural sector. The gross of the farmers is not yet involved in the ANV, while the ANV sees an opportunity from both sides to work more closely together.

Another link that is not so well developed is to the touristic sector. Although the ANV does invest in making the region more attractive (also for tourists) they do not collaborate with Kempen Goed (who represents the touristic entrepreneurs).

### *Leadership*

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In the starting phase as well the local ZLTO departments as the central ZLTO department have been important. While the initiative itself came from the local departments, the central department has helped out in this beginning phase.

Currently there is a strong chairman who is seen as passionate, he stimulates people to go to meetings and is seen as a continuous factor. *“heel gedreven” “probeert ook wel zijn mensen te mobiliseren om naar zo een bijeenkomst te gaan” “de continue factor”*

Another important person in this ANV is the field coordinator, who is not a part of the board, but is hired by the ANV. He is someone who is said to be one of the driving spirits of the association *“een drijvende kracht”* because he is aware what happens in the region and therefore can anticipate on certain developments. He has also been board member with several organizations in the region and has also been an alderman, which makes him a known person in the region and makes him also familiar with the rules and procedures and knows how things work in this region.

*“Veel mensen kennen hem en hij kent veel mensen. Hij heeft daar toch veel invloed en veel ervaring. Ook veel bestuurlijke ervaring, hij heeft ook in het bestuur van het waterschap gezeten, dus die weet van de hoed en de rand, kent de weg, kent het gebied goed. Hij is dus ook wel een belangrijke.”*

*“Dus die weet die wegen wel te bewandelen”*

These two people together with the other board members are said to be a good team and possess quite some networking skills. Another board member is also said to be a leader or *“kartrekker”*. These board members are mostly in contact with the different parties, such as municipalities in order to collaborate on nature and landscape development. There has also been another ex-board member, who in the past was important for the ANV.

*“die ook wel gepokt en gemazeld was in allerlei besturen”*

The commitment of the (board) members is also seen as differing from one person to the other. While some of the members are seen as leaders in this ANV, others are less involved according to one of the respondents.

### **10.4.2 New institutional arrangements**

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#### **Het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen**

The primary organization in their network is het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. The relationship between het Huis en de ANV is seen as good according to one of the respondents.

*“Streekhuis heeft zich altijd heel positief en constructief opgesteld ten opzichte van de ANV”*

They have helped in the beginning phase with publications when they had meetings to inform other interested individuals to join the ANV. They thus played a role in the communication with regard to the recruitment of new members.

Before the new setup of het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen, there used to be a meeting with the different parties involved in the theme of nature and landscape (so-called landscape ambassadors) which the ANV also joined. Other parties that joined these meetings were the landowning organizations, biodiversity teams and other parties involved in nature and landscape.

Since the new structure of het Huis, there is a plan to form frontrunner groups, koplopersgroepen. These meetings are still to be planned, but the ANV will also join these. Parties that join these meetings are municipalities, water boards, the province, SRE, Brabants landschap, Kempische Landgoederen and the ANV. The ANV does not financially contribute to het Huis, because she cannot afford this, but can participate in the meetings of these front runner movements. This is seen as an opportunity for the association to link up with other organizations working in the same field of interest. As one of the respondents have mentioned:

*“Het streekhuis opereert als spin in het web in de Kempen, het gegeven dat de ANV daar binnen de club van landschapsambassadeurs ook wat vaker op het streekhuis te vinden zijn geweest, dat heeft hun wel geholpen.”*

*“Het streekhuis heeft heel duidelijk een netwerkfunctie op de Kempen.”*

This network function of het Huis is seen as an easy access to the municipality and in the front runners meetings the ANV is better able to come up with new ideas and possibly create new collaborations with parties in these meetings. They are there to stimulate and to support, but not to lead. The benefits that these meetings will have for the ANV will therefore depend on the people and the parties that will join these meetings. The same respondent also states that the ANV is already quite useful for het Huis and also thinks that it can grow in the future.

## **ZLTO**

The ZLTO has been an important party in the initial phase of the ANV and still has a role. In the beginning phase the central ZLTO department has supported the setup of the ANV. People of the central ZLTO department have helped in the beginning phase with statutes and regulations in order to properly set up this ANV.

Currently there still is a connection between the ZLTO and the ANV. Statutory, the ZLTO departments have a chair in the board of the ANV. Although this is now filled up with people living in the regions, this still is formally a ZLTO chair. From ZLTO there is also still an advisor who discusses with the ANV board in order to get input for ZLTO from farmers in the field and also to advise the ANV on certain themes, such as policy changes and the future Common Agricultural Policy.

Another link is established through the appointment of certain representatives of ANVs in Brabant, who come together and discuss about strategic themes with the central ZLTO department. In this way the ZLTO can gain input from the field and the ANVs can receive support from the ZLTO; it works both ways.

Although the organizations (ZLTO and ANV) might overlap in their goals, they try to be in line with each other and keep each other updated. The ANV is an autonomous organization and not part of the ZLTO even though they might have some common goals. While the central ZLTO department thinks about strategic themes, the ANV is more seen as a group that executes landscape and nature conservation. They are more practically involved in nature and landscape conservation. When there is a problem, the ZLTO and the ANV try to work it out together. One respondent has said about the collaboration between the two that it is not optimal, but that they are also not opposed to each other:

*“Dat kan misschien altijd beter. Maar het is niet zozeer dat ze elkaar tegenwerken. Je merkt toch dat ze allebei hun eigen vereniging hebben.”*

They have proposed to work more together and look for ways in which they can complement each other. There are also some credits still from the ZLTO to the ANV, as the following respondents mentioned:

*“Die verdient daarom ook wel stukje ondersteuning van de afdelingen, te meer omdat de afdelingen zelf het initiatief hebben genomen om de ANV op te richten.”*

It has just recently been said that the local ZLTO departments want to play a more active supporting role for the ANV. But still the autonomy of the ANV is also seen as important.

*“We voelen ons eigenlijk een onafhankelijke club”*

### **Governments**

The province and also the municipality are both important parties for the ANV. Primarily, these involve the contacts about the execution and possible prolongation of het Stika. The province mainly financially contributes to these contracts. She doubles the money that was put in by the municipalities. The term for the current Stika has almost finished and is not yet clear whether some of the municipalities are willing to prolong these contracts. Although in the field people are willing to continue to execute the Stika, the municipalities are still discussing it. The ANV is actively showing the importance of the prolongation of these contracts with the municipality. A respondent of the initiative considers it unconceivable if these contracts would not be prolonged after six years of subsidies, this should be given continuity.

*“Ik vind dat je dat niet kan maken, als je nieuwe natuur aan laat leggen, dat 6 jaar gesubsidieerd laat onderhouden en daarna zegt van zoek het maar uit. Dan kan niet. Wij vinden dat je er continuïteit aan moet geven”*

ZLTO also tries to support the ANV in this, by showing the importance of nature and land conservation via this Stika with the municipalities. In other ways the ANV also tries to collaborate with the municipality. For example when the new visions for the countryside are being developed, the ANV tries to talk with the municipality about the possible nature and landscape projects for the future and who is going to execute this. These contacts are still in the development phase, which is also seen as consequential to the youthfulness of the association.

*“Het is nieuw voor allerlei mensen. Er zijn een heleboel mensen die nog aan het hele gebeuren moeten wennen.”*

Municipalities, landowners not all have the experience yet of working with this ANV, therefore this is slowly building up. Although in the first period not much contracts could be signed, currently all the contracts for the Stika are signed already.

*“Bijvoorbeeld binnen het Stika het eerst half, driekwart jaar hebben we één of twee contracten afgezet. En het budget wat voor Stika beschikbaar is voor natuurontwikkeling, op 2 gemeentes na is dat budget ook al op voor dit jaar. Het heeft een aanlooptijd nodig gehad. “*

Other contacts with the province also run via het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen, who works as a mediating party for the ANV. They talk directly to the governments, but also via het Huis.

### 10.4.3 The four dimensions

#### Endogeneity

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The motivation for setting up the ANV had very much to do with keeping control of the lands. Steered from the agricultural organization, the initial drive was to keep lands in agricultural hands. Endogeneity can also be seen in the focus they have on trying to keep nature in the way that fits with the area and what has been in this area in the past. The municipalities and higher governments determine which nature and landscape should be maintained in broad lines via their laws and regulations. But the field coordinator executes this form of endogeneity in turning these guidelines into tangible projects.

#### Sustainability

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Sustainability is an important issue for the association, as well for nature, for the people and for the economy. Ecological sustainability is reflected in the practices of the initiative. By working on the maintenance of landscape and nature in de Kempen, practices are intended to work towards ecological sustainability. Economically, the association would like to step away from the voluntary nature of maintenance. They think that people should receive an allowance for execution of landscape or nature conservation and that this cannot be upheld when keeping it as a voluntary job, especially when more nature and landscape needs to be managed which takes more time, as the following respondent said:

*“Een IVN en natuurclub wil best een aantal dagen per jaar houtwal snoeien, maar als je ineens met tien km houtwal komt, dat gaat het hobbymatige van over. “*

When labour is paid for, the executers can be held accountable and this will also stimulate people to join and for example combine this with the farm in times when the farm need less labour. When asking about social sustainability, the ANV thinks that when nature is better preserved, the people can also enjoy nature more. Also for companies, a nicer looking environment around the company can be a plus for the company's appearance.

#### Novelty

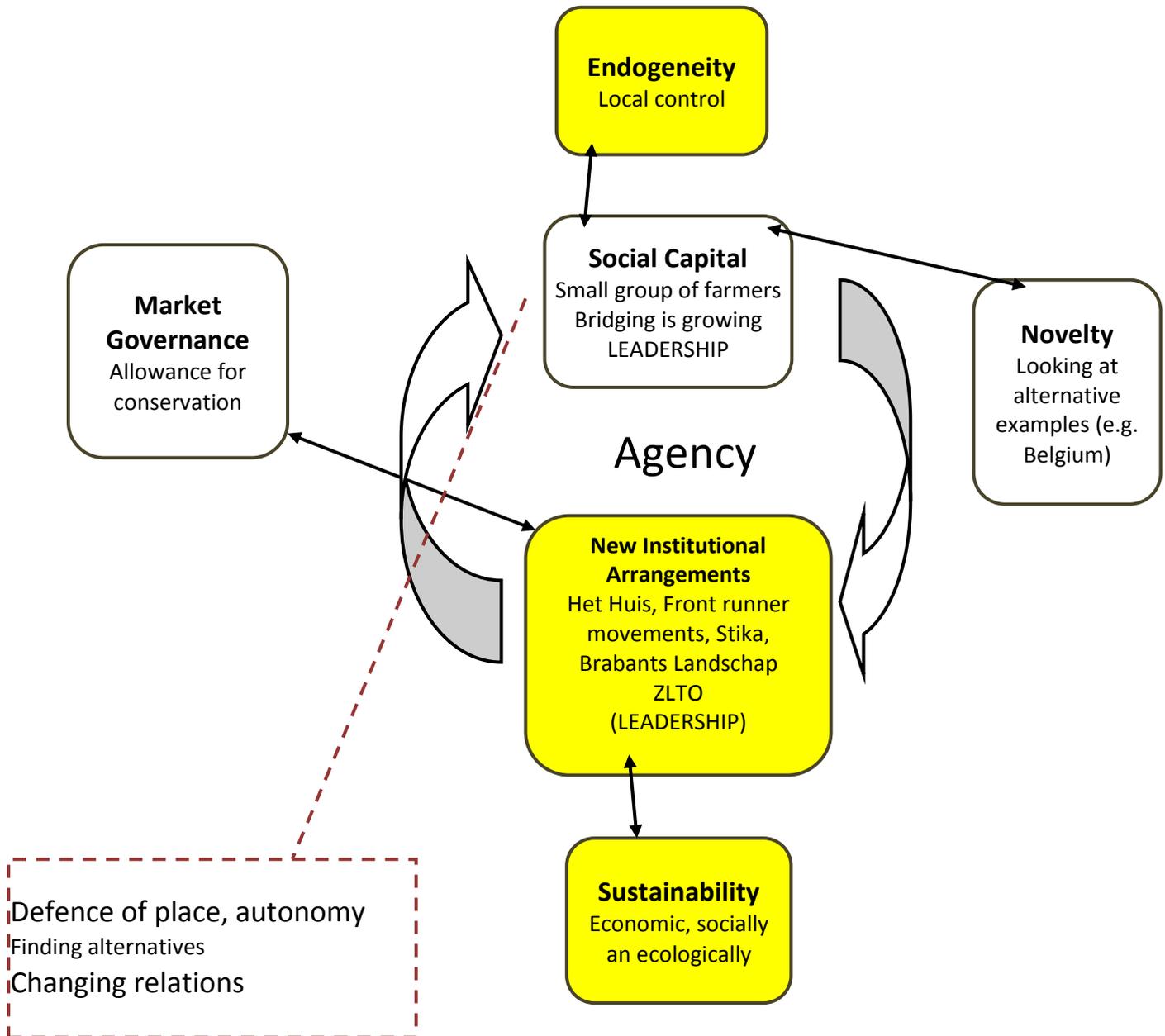
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The board is looking for innovative practices. They have been inspired by a group of farmers in Belgium who successfully own a business that takes care of nature and landscape conservation. They have visited them and learn from them about issues as accountability, allowances etc. Also on other events, such as a national day for ANVs, the board is often represented. In the contact with ZLTO they also keep in touch about the latest news from Europe and the CAP.

#### Market governance

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The association thinks that nature should be accessible for everyone and therefore nature cannot be priced and be marketed. They do think about ways to get allowances for executing nature conservation and landscape management in the form of funding or subsidies. Although the nature itself should be accessible for everyone, the maintenance of landscape and nature conservation should still be paid for.



## Analysis

This relatively young ANV was founded for keeping land in the hands of farmers and also in order to work on the relationship between the farmers and the citizens. Originating from the ZLTO departments, there is still a rather strong focus on agriculture. The youthfulness of the ANV is said to result in its small amount of projects, which mainly involves the execution of the Stika and the relatively small amount of members.

This ANV is a small group of mostly farmers, who have known each other already from before the association. The bridging social capital levels are growing, but are not yet very high. Het Huis helps them to get in contact with other organization as a mediator. In this way the institutional environment helps the ANV to enhance their bridging social capital. Leadership can be seen in the surrounding institution of ZLTO who supported the ANV in the beginning phase and still plays a role

as an advisor. But leadership can also be seen in the ANV itself, who is and considers itself as an autonomous group. Certain persons in this ANV are important leaders, who bring the ANV a step further.

Institutions play a big role for the association. Het Huis connects the association with different parties and also supports the ANV in this, especially via the front runner movements. It should in the future still be seen whether these front runner movements benefit the ANV. Although the environment is created to collaborate and exchange ideas with partners in the same work field, the actual output this will deliver has to be seen and is dependent on the people that join these meetings. ZLTO is also important for the association and they themselves feel responsibility to support the ANV, because they helped the start up. Municipalities and the province are financially very important and keep the association alive. The practices that this association is undertaking depend on the contributions of the municipality and the province in the form of het Stika. Without this practice the ANV would not be able to practice agency. Also het Brabants Landschap has played a role in the start of these Stika-contracts.

From the other four dimensions, sustainability and more particularly economic and even more specific, financial sustainability (the coloured dimensions) are seen as the most important. The ANV is struggling to be financially viable and is also eager to move away from their voluntary nature. Endogeneity is the dimension which has played a role mostly in the beginning phase of the ANV, especially to keep lands in the hands of farmers. Currently priority has shifted towards getting a position in the region for taking up landscape and nature conservation and getting paid for this. The novelty dimension is also focused on, but then mostly in the form of looking around for other inspiring examples. The ANV is less involved in innovative practices and projects; they are mostly involved in projects from het Stika.

Overall there are many links from the association to the institutional arrangements. The association is very much linked to institutions as the municipalities (for subsidies) the ZLTO (for advice) and het Huis (for their network). Connections made to the other domains are also often made in combination with the institutions and not as much by the association individually. This leads to a certain level of dependence and could bring the ANV in a vulnerable position in case this environment might change.

Looking at the typologies, I think that this association is mainly involved in defence of place. This has been the motivation of the ZLTO departments in the first place to start up this association. The other type of agency, changing relations, also makes sense for this association. With the coming changes in CAP the association would like to acquire a mediating role in the region and hereby change relations in de Kempen on the themes of landscape and nature conservation. But still the main focus seems to be on a defence of place, a focus on the endogeneity of the place and on financial sustainability.

## 10.5 Resources

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### 10.5.1 Human resources

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Looking at the human resources of the association, some seem to be lacking in this association. This also has to do with the lack of overall manpower. The association struggles to get new members and people that are willing to put effort and time in this association. This hampers the organizational capacity of the ANV; they are not able to organize the way they would like to, due to a lack of time and manpower. They would for example like more information and knowhow about the different channels through which subsidies flow, but they do not have the capacity to do so.

The ANV finds it difficult to enlarge their member base and to activate the potential members in the region. Although people respond enthusiastic to the vision of the ANV, the association is somehow not able to activate this enthusiasm and turn it into new members.

*“Het tweede is dus dat we mensen wel enthousiast kunnen maken, maar de schakel van enthousiast maken naar aan de gang gaan en meewerken. Die switch die hebben we nog niet van de grond gekregen. “*

Another respondent thinks that the association could perhaps be more actively involving people to become members of the association.

*“Ik denk dat er ook wel standaard een lidmaatschapsformulier in de koffer zit, maar in hoeverre ze echt actief benaderd worden, weet ik niet eigenlijk. Ik denk dat ze daar wat scherper op zouden kunnen opereren.”*

But one of the respondents also mentions the non-supportive nature of the people living in de Kempen and refers more to the schemas of the people in this region.

*“Er moet een knop om bij die mensen, als die knop niet omgaat, dan weet ik niet of wij het vol kunnen houden.”*

*“En dat kunnen we niet forceren alleen maar proberen, door middel van missiewerk om ze te bekeren.”*

They have had for example an information evening about the ANV and their work and there were about 60-70 visitors. While one of the respondents mentions this amount as being relatively good, another respondent mentions the potential of engaging more people, especially more citizens instead of mainly farmers and sees the reach of the ANV as limited.

ZLTO is also supporting the ANV in finding new members. Especially with the upcoming changes in the CAP, nature and landscape conservation can become more important for the income of the farmers.

Connected to that is also the level of entrepreneurship, which most of the members seem to have as individuals, but is not seen in the group as a whole. As one of the respondents emphasizes the difficulty there is to translate ideas in concrete projects and when an opportunity arises, to take this opportunity.

*“Van idee naar concrete projecten en vervolgens dat te realiseren, dat valt niet mee.”*

*“de vraag is of de ANV vervolgens professioneel genoeg is om op het moment dat er kansen zijn, het op dat moment te gaan verzilveren.”*

Although entrepreneurship cannot be measured by its amount of projects only, these respondents mention the possibilities that could have been made use of and see this as a constraint for the ANV. A lack of collective leadership is seen by more respondents. This is also said to possibly be an effect of the youthfulness of the ANV and something that can grow in the future. Networking skills are present but mainly available through het Huis. They meet up with partners of their expertise in the upcoming front runner movements. They also go to knowledge exchange meetings and look around for inspiring examples. They are also actively trying to look for new partners. Collaboration with other parties is very important and also a priority of the ANV. One respondent of the ZLTO also mentions the presence of the ANV when something is organized by the ZLTO on nature and landscape management.

*“Als we als ZLTO iets organiseren, is deze club wel trouw van de partij.”*

Although the ANV is seen as lacking some capacities to become more successful one respondent adds to this the determination of the board to get nature and landscape conservation in their portfolio.

*“Ik merk dat ze gewoon druk bezig zijn met die Stika regeling, dat ze gewoon heel graag willen, dat ze er ook energie op zetten om dat bij de gemeente en de provincie bij elkaar te krijgen. Ik weet dat ze ook aan het zoeken zijn naar wat kunnen we nog meer doen en hoe kunnen we dat doen.”*

### 10.5.2 Non-human resources

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The non-human resources time, money and manpower are all interrelated and seen as constraints for the ANV. For some of the board members, time is a real constraint. When something happens unexpected the farm is always on the first place.

*“Op de eerste plaats zijn de mensen boer.”*

In the beginning phase of the cooperative, when looking for board members, it was said that it wouldn't cost the board members as much time as it currently does, what has been disappointing for some. Nevertheless an external advisor sees that most of the board members attend the meetings and that the turnout is mostly good.

Money is also seen as useful to be able to hire someone who arranges the time consuming things that the boards now does. So the lack of time could be solved by additional finances. Nevertheless the association does not have the money to hire personnel.

### 10.5.3 Other possibilities, constraints

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#### **Size of the region**

Another element that is seen as a constraint for the ANV might be the size of the region. While the Kempen region is relatively big, one of the respondents mentions that people identify themselves with their own backyard.

*“Mensen vereenzelvigen zich veel eerder met hun eigen achtertuin.”*

*“Want iemand in Hilvarenbeek heeft niets met iemand in Bergeijk in zeker zin.”*

The size of the region could influence the involvement of the farmers and the citizens and be an extra constraint to join the association. So in this case, the boundaries of the Kempen do not fit the boundaries that the people in this region experience.

#### **Professionalism**

The ANV is not planning to do everything themselves and would like to keep focused on the execution of the work, instead of the more professional and strategic tasks. They hold the link with the ZLTO to help and support them in these tasks. The ZLTO is willing to support them, but on the condition that the ANV keeps doing the things that it is good in as one of the respondents said.

*“Het aansturen van mensen, mensen zoeken, enthousiasmeren, afspraken maken met wellicht lokale partijen, dat zou je de ANV nog wel kunnen toevertrouwen. Maar op het moment dat het om grote bedragen gaat en grote risico's, dan hebben ze financieel ook niet de middelen om daar op in willen springen, op dat gebied kunnen wij hen ontzorgen.”*

The association is seen by this respondent as good in doing the things it arranges now, but when more professional tasks should be performed the ZLTO could help them out.

## 10.6 Schemas

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### *De Kempen in general*

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From the character traits mentioned by Meertens and de Vries (1938) unity, hospitality, helpfulness, openness to outsiders, mentality of acceptance and simplicity and warm-heartedness are recognized by multiple respondents. Additionally, a tendency to collaborate is also often mentioned by the respondents from as well the ANV as the cooperative. This tendency is seen as an important part of the history of people in de Kempen. One of the respondents also mentions the long history of collaboration in this area. The municipalities have been working together for a longer period already and there still is a regional collaboration in the form of het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen, while in other reconstruction areas this has dissolved.

*“Bepaalde dingen lukken gewoon in de Kempen omdat ze gewend zijn om samen te werken en dat is op andere plekken in Brabant lang niet altijd zo geweest. Er zijn een aantal mensen overgebleven na de reconstructiecommissie in Brabant en deze staat nog het meest stevig, van de andere moet ik het nog zien.”*

This collaborating nature is said to go together with an entrepreneurial capacity and perseverance in the nature of the people. One of the respondents would like to add that this collaborative nature holds, but also has its limits and that this cooperative attitude has decreased.

*“vanaf de midden, eind jaren 80, de generatie die toen begonnen is met landbouw en boeren een heleboel hebben de coöperatie vaarwel hebben gezegd. Die toch meer met zichzelf bezig waren, met het eigen bedrijf dan meer de coöperatieve gedachte. Het hele coöperatieve is duidelijk minder geworden.”*

*“Er zijn er een aantal, dat geldt niet voor iedereen, er zijn een heleboel mensen die best mee willen werken, die eigenlijk dat coöperatieve wel in zich hebben, maar echt die agrariërs dat zijn meer de individualisten”*

This respondent points to the difference in schemas within the agricultural sector; while some farmers are seen as more cooperative, other are said to be more individualistic. As one respondent from the ANV said:

*“Een heleboel agrariërs hier hebben ook nog niet zo’n gevoel met de ANV. Omdat hier een gebied is met ontzettend veel veehouderij en men vindt dat elke m2 waar op geboerd kan worden, dat dat ook voor de agrarische sector bestemd moet zijn. “*

This respondent also mentions this difference between regions in de Kempen. One region in de Kempen is seen as more involved with the intensive farming, while the other is seen as more cooperative.

*“Het is niet helemaal Kempisch. Het is hier meer deze hoek, Reusel, de Mierde. Het is gewoon een stukje van de Kempen en hier is het vooral. Je hebt hier heel veel intensieve veehouderij. Als de ene boer een tractor koopt van 200 pk de buurman een van 220. als de een 1000 zeugen heeft, moet de andere nog groter. “*

*“bij Hoge en Lage Mierde, daar is de mentaliteit anders. En Hilvarenbeek en Esbeek ook anders en Eersel is de mentaliteit ook anders. Hilvarenbeek en Eersel waren de eerste gemeentes waar Stika al vrij snel uitgeput waren. Hier in Reusel de Mierde, als we op het eind 50% kunnen wegzetten, mogen we in onze handen klappen. In Bladel is het Stika ook helemaal weggezet. “*

The ANV and agricultural nature and landscape conservation in general is more popular in the areas with less intensive farming and a more cooperative nature, according to this respondent. The local politics are also said to mainly focus on agriculture in these areas of intensive agriculture and is seen as a representation of the local population.

### *Schema of the ANV*

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Some of the respondents also mention a typical character trait of the members of the ANV. They are said to be surrounded by a sense of “gezelligheid”, a good atmosphere.

*“er zit wel een sterke mate van gemoedelijkheid in. Dus, ja heel, hoe zal ik dat aangeven, het vergaderen kent in ieder geval, gezelligheid is daar wel een belangrijk iets in, en dat zorgt ook wel dat de teamgeest goed is.”*

While this is said to encourage the collaboration among the members, this schema is also seen with its downsides, according to one of the respondents.

*“Hier heel zwaar de knuppel in het hoederhok gooien dat gaat hier net iets gematigder dan elders.”*

Which can lead to situations in which some things are left unsaid, which makes one of the respondents doubt the professionalism of this association.

*“dat zaken dan nog niet helemaal uitgesproken zijn die van belang zijn.”*

*“Neemt niet weg dat de dingen die besproken moeten worden, worden wel besproken, maar ik vind dat er in zekere zin, ik kan me daar nog niet een professionele club daar voorstellen.”*

### *Other Schemas*

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Regarding different mentalities in the Kempen, the ANV has had contact with a commercial party and also with governments and they have had difficulty with the slowness of procedures. As one of the respondents has noticed:

*“het zijn wel ondernemers, dus in die zin, op het moment dat dingen stroperig lopen, zoals bij het Stika, of het dan bij een commercieel bureau ligt of bij een overheidsinstelling die de middelen moet uitkeren of de uitbetaling loopt, daar kunnen ze zich wel over opwinden.”*

### *Analysis*

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When looking at the constraints that this ANV is faced with, most of them are interrelated. The club does not have many members yet; the few members that do invest time are used intensively and are looking for new ways to finance extra manpower. The ANV is able to make people enthusiastic for nature and landscape conservation, but is less able to actually get people to actually become a member. This lack of manpower and lack of new potential members leads to a loss of energy which hampers the ANV in its development.

Another constraint that is mentioned and that could be related to this decisiveness or lack of energy is the size of the region, which could make people feel less connected to each other. Maybe

commitment and involvement with a certain region is important for people to actually put effort in this region.

Another element is the strong bond there still seems to be with institutions around them. Het Huis, but maybe even stronger, de ZLTO still supports the ANV in certain issues. It could well be that the position of the ANV towards the ZLTO is still unclear. While on the one hand the autonomy of the ANV is emphasized, also the dependence is seen in certain tasks that are outsourced to the ZLTO. This duality of dependence and autonomy seems contradictory.

Collaboration, “gezelligheid” and easy-going are words to describe the schemas of de Kempen and the ANV as well. Although these words look beneficial they are up to a certain extent. The easy-going nature of the members also is said to lead to decreased professionalism in the group.

Another thing that was said is that collaboration in the agricultural sector in some parts of the Kempen is hard to find. Individualism and a focus on large scale farming seem to have priority for some farmers and in some of the regions. These regions have also shown less interest in the ANV and its goals for the region. This dominant schema in these areas could be a reason for the difficulty the association has with acquiring new members. While for a bottom-up initiative it is important that there is enough support from society, this schema seems to hamper the agency and capacity of the ANV to grow and develop its ideals.

## 11. Comparing the cases

In this chapter I will compare the four cases and look for commonalities and differences, which could contribute to a better understanding of my research questions. I will look at the sub questions separately and compare in the answer of these questions the regions as well as the initiatives.

<p>Comparing the regions: Development of the region and vision for the future Involved actors and institutions Agency:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Rural web (practices)</li> </ul>           Constraining and enabling (resources, schemas)</p>	  	<p>VS</p>	  
<p>Comparing the initiatives: Agency:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Rural web (practices)</li> </ul>           Constraining and enabling (resources, schemas)</p>	  	<p>VS</p>	  

### 11.1 Comparing the regions

In these first paragraphs I will compare the Kempen and het Vechtdal on their past experiences and future plans for regional development. In order to analyse the agency in these region, it is first important to closely analyse the different contexts in which this agency can be witnessed and therefore I will first compare these regions on their past development, visions for the future and look at the networks of these regions.

#### *Past development and future plans*

When looking at the past developments of these two regions, both have a history with stimulating regional development. The provinces have in both regions been the drivers of stimulating collaboration as seen in the previous chapters. In het Vechtdal this has led to a temporary programme for regional development, which was led by the province in collaboration with mainly governmental institutions. In de Kempen a new institutional arrangement was formed by a network of public as well as private parties, in order to coordinate regional development and stimulate bottom-up initiatives. These differential environments influenced the visions that were made in these regions; while in de Kempen a broad range of institutions were involved with the design of the vision, in het Vechtdal the vision was mainly created from the top down.

On a lower level, bottom-up initiatives also have visions for their environment. In both of the regions, these visions are supported by the regional vision, but not to the same extent; while in de

Kempen the bottom-up initiatives are linked to their regional institutional environment, in het Vechtdal the link between practice and institutional environment is less strong. While in het Vechtdal this connection mainly involves occasional financial support, in de Kempen the institutional environment functions more as a network for advise, support and connections to other parties.

Regarding the different visions for the future, the regions also differ in their approach. While in het Vechtdal, the province still takes a leading role in the programme and also takes up a mediating role between the agricultural sector and the other sectors in this region. In de Kempen, het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen tries to mediate between parties when differences in vision occur. So while in het Vechtdal the province still takes on a central role in the development of the region, in de Kempen this leadership is shared in the network, which represents many sectors in the region. This leads to different institutional environments for bottom-up initiatives in these two regions. While in het Vechtdal, the province is the first institution to go to for issues regarding the region and dealing with potential vision difference, in de Kempen there is a bigger network in place with parties from different sectors, which takes over the role that in het Vechtdal is done primarily by the province.

### *Involved actors and institutions*

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When looking at the actors and institutions involved in these two regions, there are some differences. In het Vechtdal, the province was the main actor in the design of the vision, more parties joined in the execution of this vision, while in de Kempen a broader network participated and also participated more intensely already from the beginning phase of the regional plans.

This difference in participation is related to the different structures of the two visions. While in het Vechtdal a temporary programme was developed aimed at specific spatial and socio-economic goals, the Agenda for de Kempen is seen as the start of an enduring structure which has the ambition to become a sustainable institution in de Kempen. The choice for the involved parties in de Kempen was hereby also to keep on collaborating in this region for years to come. While in het Vechtdal the programme is an implementation of government policy on a regional scale, in de Kempen the Agenda was a vision not only for the development of the region, but also a vision on how to stimulate development. While in het Vechtdal the vision was mainly focused on a certain goal, in de Kempen the vision was also directed at the means to reach this goal.

Another factor that could explain this difference in participation is the overall abundance of collaborations and organizations in de Kempen, which increases the chances of finding organizations that work on the same regional level. It also raises the importance of a coordinating body for these collaborations, which het Huis offers. Het Vechtdal on the other hand is less organized than de Kempen in terms of organizations that cover the entire region. With fewer partners on this regional level to choose from, the chances of finding connections are also more limited and coordination is also less necessary.

Overall the institutional network in de Kempen is more diverse and more connected to the initiatives in the region than it is in het Vechtdal. For the initiatives and their agency, this means that access to the different actors in the network is also more easily organized than in het Vechtdal.

The different institutional environments can be seen as different governance modes. While in de Kempen governance is more shared among public and private parties, in het Vechtdal, governance is more in the hands of the governments. Next to this more shared form of governance in de Kempen, this region is also more linked with the practice of bottom-up initiatives. This contrasts with the more central governance mode which is less linked to the practice of the initiatives. In de Kempen this creates an enabling environment for the initiatives; by this stronger link with the institutional environment, the initiatives in this region have access to different networks for support, possible collaborations, advice etc. The institutional environment in het Vechtdal on the other hand is less enabling for initiatives; while these initiatives might be just as able to access resources, such as money, advise, network etc., they are more dependent on their own capacities for acquiring these resources than the initiatives in de Kempen, which are enabled more by the institutional arrangement.

### 11.1.1 Agency

After having compared the different contexts of these regions, I will now look at commonalities and differences in the agency of the initiatives in these two regions. In order to do this, I will start with comparing the two rural webs of the regions. These webs show most clearly in which dimensions the regions focus their practices and makes it therefore a useful tool for comparison.

#### Rural web

When comparing the complete rural webs of the cases, some commonalities become clear. Comparing the Kempen to het Vechtdal, the most striking difference is in the prominent role of either the institutional arrangements or the social capital in a region, which is shown by the coloured dimensions in the web in the figures below.

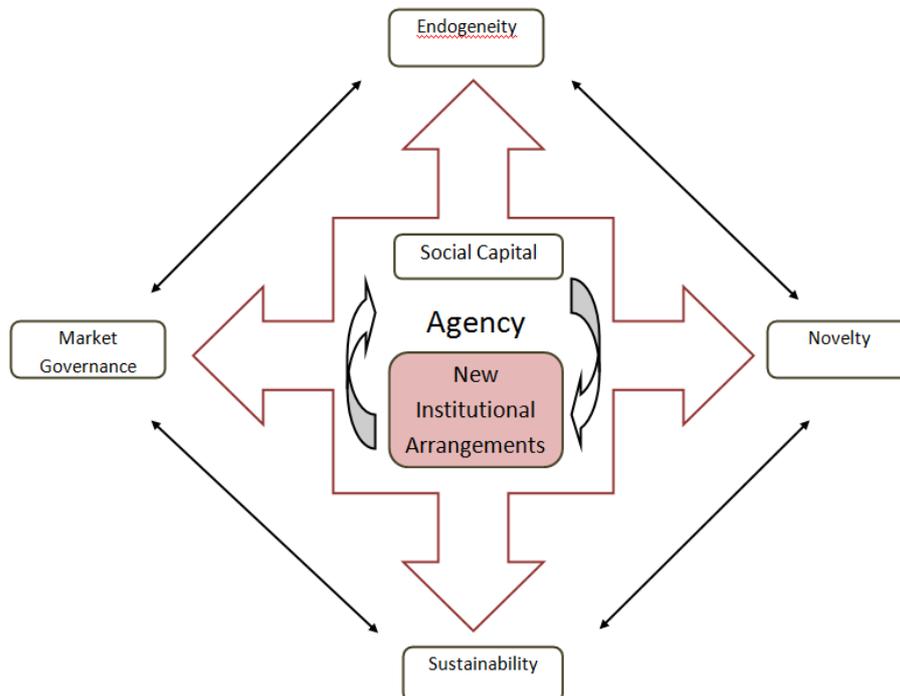
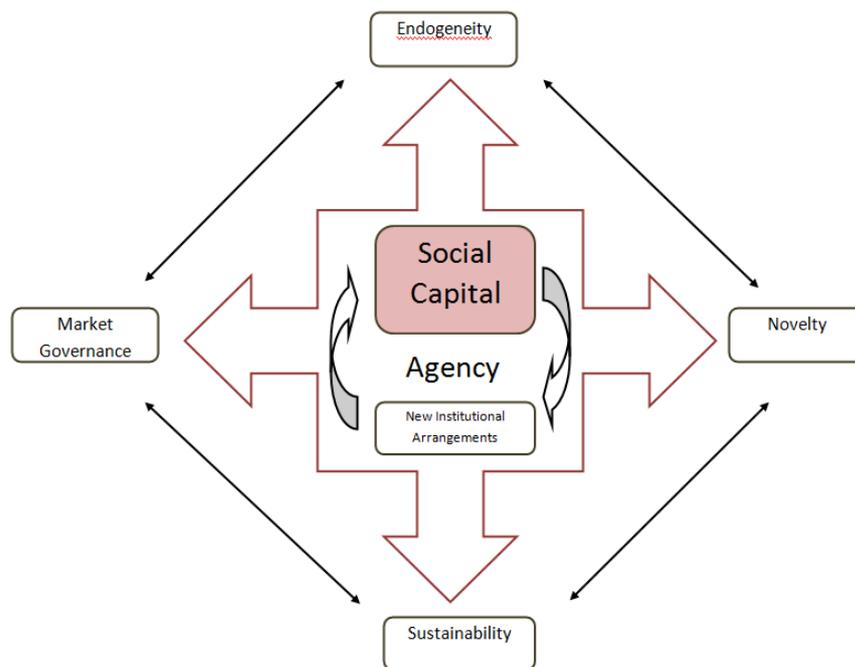


Figure 13: Rural web for de Kempen



**Figure 14: Rural web for het Vechtdal**

Just as the contexts of the two regions have already shown, institutional arrangements are more extensive and prominent in the Kempen compared to het Vechtdal, while social capital levels are higher in het Vechtdal compared to de Kempen. In the following paragraphs I will further clarify this analysis.

### *Social capital*

First of all, it must be said that social capital has proven to be important for all initiatives in both regions. These initiatives are all dependent on links and relationships within the initiative. The difference is more related to either the level of bonding or the level of bridging social capital. In het Vechtdal this bonding kind of social capital is more crucial for the initiatives than in de Kempen. With ANV de Ommer Marke the first years were successful partly due to the good linkages that the board has achieved in the region with already existing bonding ties. Also the cooperative Vechtdalproducten has actively chosen to focus on internal dynamics before looking outwards to other parties in the region, which emphasizes again the focus on bonding social capital. Although bridging links also play a role (De Ommer Marke is also currently focusing more on bridging links with regard to the coming CAP and the focus there might be on collective forms of agricultural nature conservation), the emphasis is still on bonding social capital. In the initiatives in de Kempen, the emphasis in their plan and vision is more focused on bridging social capital, especially in combination with the strong institutional environment. Links with other parties, food distributors, the intensive agricultural sector etc. are seen as important linkages for the future development of the initiatives and the institutional environment also encourages these links.

### *Leadership*

Connected to this focus on either bonding social capital or bridging and institutional capital, is the type of leadership that these regions show. In de Kempen, leadership was mainly shown in the ways to which the initiative could connect to bridging social capital (connecting ANV Kempenland to the agricultural sector and connecting cooperative Kempen Goed to the market and other parties). In

het Vechtdal, leadership also concerned the focus on more bonding social capital. In the beginning phase of ANV de Ommer Marke, the networks of the leaders and the position they had in the region were important for the success in the first years of the ANV. Also in the cooperative Vechtdalproducten, after a leadership style that focused more on vision and developing bridging social capital, the cooperative is now also purposively choosing for different kinds of leaders, which are seen to fit the phase of the initiative. The difference in focus of leadership in these two regions, either looking more outwards (bridging social capital) or also inwards (bonding social capital) remains interesting. For the type of leadership, the region itself and the phase that the initiative is in, matter. Looking at the leaders in the Vechtdal cases of this moment, these are primarily process managers and focusing on internal agreement, while in de Kempen leadership is found in the institutional environment, which tries to link the initiative to the wider networks in the region. This also connects to the embeddedness of leadership in the social capital dimension, either bridging or bonding, which has also referred to.

In the article by IL.G. Horlings and Marsden (2010) leadership styles are also connected to the different dimensions of regional development as seen in the following table.

Leadership domain	Social capital	Policy arrangements
Market governance and novelty	Co-operatives, business associations	Triple helix, entrepreneurial regime
Social capital and institutional arrangements	Civil participation and local action	Strong and coherent local governance
Endogeneity and sustainability	Public-private cooperation	Regional cooperation and (informal) institutional frameworks

**Table 5: types of leadership, nested in social capital and policy arrangements, Horlings and Marsden (2010)**

Leadership in the Vechtdal region seems to focus mainly on the second and the third type of leadership in which endogeneity, sustainability and social capital are important dimensions. In de Kempen leadership has mainly focused on the first and second type of leadership in which the institutional environment, market governance and bridging social capital are important dimensions through which leadership is showed. None of the (ideal)types fit precisely the regions and the initiatives, but it does point to the embeddedness of the leadership style in the dominant dimensions of the web. Especially the trade- off between either an internally organized rural web, focusing on social capital or an externally oriented web, focusing on bridging links and stronger connection to the institutional environment, seems to show the connection from the rural web to the type of leadership.

Another difference between the two regions is that leadership in het Vechtdal is mostly executed by persons or groups and in de Kempen this leadership is also shown by institutions or representatives of these institutions. While de Ommer Marke and Vechtdalproducten have been led mostly by individuals, in de Kempen, the crowded institutional environment can also be seen as leaders for these initiatives; ANV Kempenland was stimulated by the ZLTO departments and the cooperative Kempen Goed has also been formed with the help of the Kempen Goed foundation. This shows that the leadership also changes with respect to the dominance of either social capital or the institutional arrangements. This could also be explained by the urgency of more leadership from the social capital dimension, when this leadership is not expressed from the institutional environment. As said before, in het Vechtdal, due to the less involved institutional environment, more strain is put

on the internal social capital dimension. Therefore the leadership style will more naturally come from this social capital dimension, because the institutional environment will probably not take up this role. The type of leadership seems to focus on the dimension through which agency is expressed in a certain region; in de Kempen where agency is mainly practiced through linking and networking, leadership also focuses on these activities and in het Vechtdal where agency has been expressed mainly through strong social bonds and bonding social capital, the leadership style also further focuses on these strong bonds.

Although leadership is directly embedded in the rural web of the region, sometimes leaders can also work as a trigger to question the regional way of doing, or *development culture* as Sotarauta (2002) has called it. This is most clearly shown in the case of Vechtdalproducten in which the first leader, who can be seen as a battering ram, was essential in the set-up of the initiative. Although in a later phase, this style of leadership did not fit anymore, in the start-up of this cooperative, this style of leadership was crucial and made it possible for the producers in this region to see an alternative future.

Leaders can next to this type also be seen as connectors between different sectors or *network shuttles* (cooperative Kempengoed), as enthusiastic people with a clear goal, or *battering rams* (in the first phase of cooperative Vechtdalproducten), as process managers in the time of conflict, or *handicraftsmen* (cooperative Vechtdalproducten), as innovators or *visionaries* (ANV de Ommer Marke) or as a combination of the above. These different types of leadership point to different qualities of leaders and also address different needs of the initiatives. What was also interesting is that one of the respondents also mentions the importance of the timing of leadership in the development of an initiative; every phase needs another kind of leader. In the case of Vechtdalproducten, leadership has changed completely from the *battering ram* to a more *network shuttle*, *handicraftsmen* type of leadership. This is also emphasized by Sotarauta (2002) who sees that different types of leaders are needed in different contexts. Dependent on the phase and process that the initiative is going through, the kind of leadership that is needed, also changes.

With respect to the research by L. G. Horlings (2012), I could not find any clues on the importance of either individual or collective leadership with respect to the size of the territory. Individual leadership was as well important in the first phases of the regional initiative such as Vechtdalproducten, but also in the smaller scale initiative of de Ommer Marke. In the phase that these initiatives are in now, they are looking for more shared forms of leadership, irrespective of their size. In de Kempen, collective leadership has been important for both the cooperative as the ANV, both working on a regional scale. Although there have been individual leaders in the set-up of these initiatives, coming from the institutional environment, the current lead of these initiatives is shared among the board members. This shows that leadership on the one hand adjusts to the region, but also that different phases of an initiative require different types of leaders.

### *Institutional Arrangements*

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Another difference between the two regions is the role of an institutional arrangement. As already said, the institutional arrangements in the two regions differ substantially. While the cases in het Vechtdal have primarily received financial support and local governments are supportive of the goals of the initiatives, in de Kempen the institutional arrangements create access to more resources, such as networks, knowledge and advice. First of all this has to do with the presence of het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen. This institutional arrangement links the local initiatives to many diverse parties in the region. For the ANV this means a connection to other parties working on nature and landscape issues and for the cooperative this means an entry to advice and resources. Next to this network structure in de Kempen, the initiatives are also surrounded by many other institutions which offer them support and advice (e.g. ZLTO, Kempen Goed foundation, municipalities etc.). This more crowded institutional environment offer a complete different context for the initiatives of the two regions. While in de Kempen initiatives have easier access to different kinds of resources, in het

Vechtdal this access needs to be found via other ways. One of the ways in which access to resources can be found is through making use of networks and relationships in the region, in other words in social capital.

### *Relationship social capital and institutional arrangements*

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It is interesting to see that in the region in which social capital levels seem to be mainly focused on bonding social capital (het Vechtdal) that the institutional environment seems to be less involved with the initiatives. Also, the other way around, in the region where the institutional arrangements are more extensive (de Kempen), the bonding social capital levels seem to be less focused on. There could be a trade-off between the levels of bonding social capital and institutional arrangements. This relates to the finding by L.G. Horlings and Marsden (2010) who have seen that

*“new institutional arrangements may also function to compensate for the otherwise critical lack of (especially bridging) social capital.”* (p.39).

It could well be that regions with a prominent role for institutional arrangements would have smaller social capital levels. In this way an abundance of institutional arrangements would not invite social capital levels to grow in importance. The other way around could also be true; a lack of an enabling institutional environment could ask for more social capital to develop. The higher emphasis on social capital levels in het Vechtdal could therefore be seen as a consequence of the lower levels of institutional involvement. Higher social capital levels can be a reaction against the institutional void that is created in the region. Although it is not important to find out what was there first, the inactive institutional environment or the active social capital base, it is clear from the cases that these different institutional environments offer different contexts for the initiatives. An engaged institutional environment has granted easy access to more resources for the initiatives in de Kempen and in het Vechtdal, the bonding social capital has been crucial for the survival of the initiatives. The changing relationship between institutional arrangements and social capital, is I think the most interesting interaction in the webs of these initiatives and in their potential to practice agency.

A factor that could account for the different emphases on social capital or on institutions could be the habits, culture and way of doing in a certain region. This has something to do with the schemas in a region, which makes the Kempen into a region of collaborators with high institutional density and het Vechtdal into a region in which relationships and trust are important values and bonding social capital is crucial. Although I do not propose to accrue the different environments to culture only, I do think that the history in a certain region matters for what works, or what is at least seen as working. This also refers to what has been commonly named path-dependency, which means that choices that have been made in the past influence the current set of choices that can be made or to be more shortly: history matters. This is also reflected in this analysis and is part of the explanation of the different structural environments in these regions.

This also connects to the hybrid countryside elaborated upon by Woods (2007). Although it seems as if the regions face similar external developments from outside the region (budget cuts in agricultural nature conservation, lower prices for agricultural products decentralization of governments etc.), regions deal with these external influences differently. This can have to with:

- The history of the region or path dependency or “soft structure”. This also relates to the schemas that Sewell (1992) has talked about. In de Kempen the focus on collaboration and bridging social capital. This is how it has always been done and people have a (good) history with this “culture” of collaboration. In het Vechtdal these strong bridging links are not business as usual and therefore this institutional environment looks completely different. While in de Kempen initiatives are more dependent on institutional arrangements, in het Vechtdal this dependency seems to be more on the bonding social capital. The dimensions

that the regions focus on the most have the danger of becoming a liability. Institutions can in this way compensate for the lack of sustainable social capital, or the other way around; the social capital could also compensate for the decreased institutional involvement.

- On the other hand, the structural environment of the initiatives or the more “hard” structures, which refer more to the human and non-human resources also have an effect. Available money, subsidies, manpower, capacities belong to these more “hard” structural factors. Although the history and schema of a region might play a role, these more tangible structures can still facilitate or constrain. It is the combination of the predetermined habits and schemas in a region with the structural resources in this region, which become the overall structural environment in which agency can be expressed.

## Schemas

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A factor that has been mentioned before as important for understanding the development of these regions are their schemas. The initiatives point to two types of mentalities and characters in these regions. Het Vechtdal is seen as a region where people are more awaiting, conservative, obedient and loyal. This has different impacts on the functioning of the initiatives. For the cooperative this has emphasized the need to focus on trust and building relationships. This is seen as particularly important for this region in which trust is highly valued. For the ANV this schema has influenced the success in the beginning years. The loyalty, obedient behaviour and focus on relationships had quickly led to a big member base in the first years. On the other hand this schema also means that when people are committed to certain groups, bridging links that cross the boundaries of one group could be more problematic to develop. With a focus on bonding social capital, bridging social capital could be underdeveloped, which could become a difficulty for the further development of the initiatives, especially in a time where future policy would ask for more collaboration between initiatives.

For de Kempen, the buzzword seems to be collaboration. Almost all respondents emphasize the ability to collaborate as typical for this region. Although one can question whether this social construct is fed by actual experiences or by repetition and hearsay, from what I have seen and heard, it seems that at least in the level of organization, the Kempen show a collaborative nature. This shows in the fact that for almost every group of people a new organization is founded. On the other hand a respondent has mentioned the less collaborative nature of the more intensive agricultural sector towards agricultural nature conservation. Collaboration then also seems to have its limits and is not initiated with every party. This study is merely to see what factors influence the agency in this region of which schemas can be an important one.

A negative aspect that connects to the collaborative nature and multiple bridging links is the tendency to not speak up their mind. Being engaged in multiple collaborations could also lead to less open conversations and a less open agenda. This could also be connected to the neo-corporatist nature of Brabant as was already identified by Frouws (1993) in which decision making in this region has been dependent on the good relationship between the governmental institutions and the representatives of agriculture. This strong bond and dependent relationship between the representatives of the agricultural sector and the government can still be seen in the density of the institutional environment. The focus could be more on keeping the relationships good and could be less on the goals of the initiative. This has to do with the so-called shadow of the future, resulting from the theory on the prisoner’s dilemma. This theory by Axelrod (1997) mentions that when people will meet again they will not behave differently than if they would not meet again. This also connects to other character traits that have been mentioned by respondents: easy-going and focused on “gezelligheid”. These traits are by the respondents seen as overall decreasing the professional capacity of the initiative. By focusing more on the process of keeping a good relationship for the future with the multiple partners in the region, it can become harder to get to decision making and goal realization in the near future.

## *Influence on agency and linking with theory*

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Interesting is also to look at what these differential environments or regions mean for the agency of the initiatives. While institutional arrangements do provide entrances to resources (money, knowledge etc.), which gives the initiative power to act, resources alone are not enough to create agency. When an initiative is very well endowed in resources, this does not mean it is capable to practice his vision and show agency. The other way around is also true; an initiative without resources and a supporting institutional environment is also less capable to act and lacks power to actually practice agency.

It would be too easy to say that both are important (although they are), but I do think that the core of an agentic initiative, lies in the initiative itself. Vision and bonding social capital are crucial to even be able to look for resources. This is best shown by the case of Vechtdalproducten. While in this case the financial resources were taken care of, the internal dynamics of the initiative (differentiated visions and plans and eventual conflict and distrust) made this initiative lose its agency completely. So although I think that institutional arrangements are important too (the financial resources were provided for by the province) I do think that agency starts with a good basis of a shared vision and a good social capital base. This is most clearly shown in the success of de Ommer Marke, in which the social capital dimension was crucial in the beginning years of the ANV. The position that the leaders had in the social networks of the region has played an important role in the success of the association and led to an energetic, agentic association. Leadership in this case was also crucial, mostly because it suited the focus on relationships and social capital, which was and still is important in this region. The institutional arrangements in this case did play a role, but were not crucial in the start-up of the association.

On the other hand, this emphasis on bonding social capital could also have its downsides. It could be that because of the lower level of institutional involvement in het Vechtdal, more strain has been put on the social capital dimension and the leadership dimension. While in de Kempen there is a mediating party in the form of het Huis and supportive institutions in the form of Kempen Goed and ZLTO, this was less available in het Vechtdal. This could put more strain on the social capital dimension and more dependence on internal capacities, than in a region where this dependence is more shared with the institutional environment. This could have played a role in the breakdown of Vechtdalproducten in its first years and therefore also shows the dependency there can develop on these internal relationships.

The emphasis on the institutional environments can also have its consequences for agency of the initiatives. It has led to greater dependence on these institutions in de Kempen, in comparison to het Vechtdal. The initiatives in het Vechtdal have been initiated more from the bottom-up and from the social capital already available in the region, while in de Kempen these initiatives were more supported from their institutional environment. In a changing institutional environment as we are witnessing now, in budget cuts, decentralizations etc, dependence on this institutional environment could threaten the viability of the initiatives. The balance between becoming independent from and still being dependent on the structural environment (for resources, advice etc.) is very hard to get right. This is exactly the interaction between social capital and institutional arrangements, society and governments and between agency and structure, in which both parties are looking for new roles and responsibilities.

So although the internal, bonding social capital dimension seems a crucial precondition for initiatives to start-up and generate energy, in order to keep this energy in the initiative, bridging links are also important. Leadership can play a role, but should also suit the process that the initiative is going through and should be sensitive for the regional way of doing. Institutional arrangements can also play a role in this maintenance of agency by providing access to more bridging links and thereby indirectly increasing the potential for the endurance of agency. For both factors, it must be said that regional differences also matter. The way of doing, the schemas, but maybe more accurately, the habits and history of a region influences the potential for agency. Leadership and institutional

arrangements could make use of the knowledge of these regional specificities, in order to facilitate the initiative more effectively. Knowledge about this regional way of doing could be helpful in facilitating agency. This relates to the knowledge of schemas that Sewell (1992) has written about. He has seen the knowledge of the schemas as crucial before being able to show agency. The findings of this thesis confirm this importance of the knowledge, especially in the form of knowledge on the way that things work in a region.

## 11.2 Comparing the initiatives

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After having compared the two regions, it is also interesting to compare the two types of initiatives. Having similar goals and visions for their region, the food cooperatives and the agri-environmental associations are most interestingly compared on the expression of their agency.

### 11.2.1 Agency

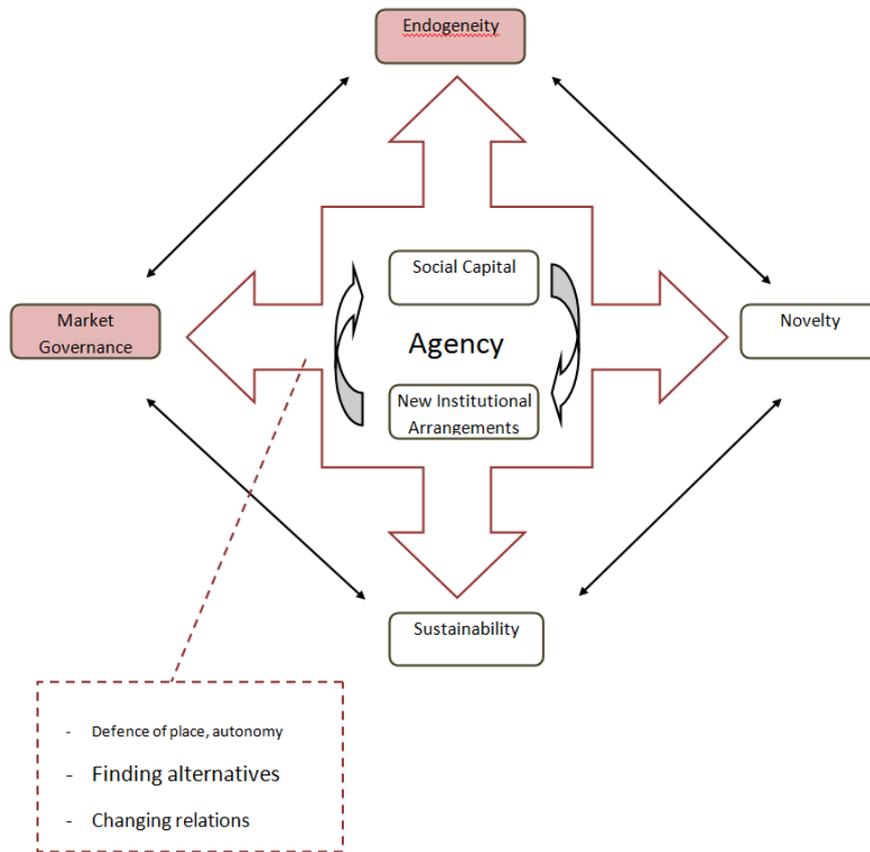
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#### *Rural web*

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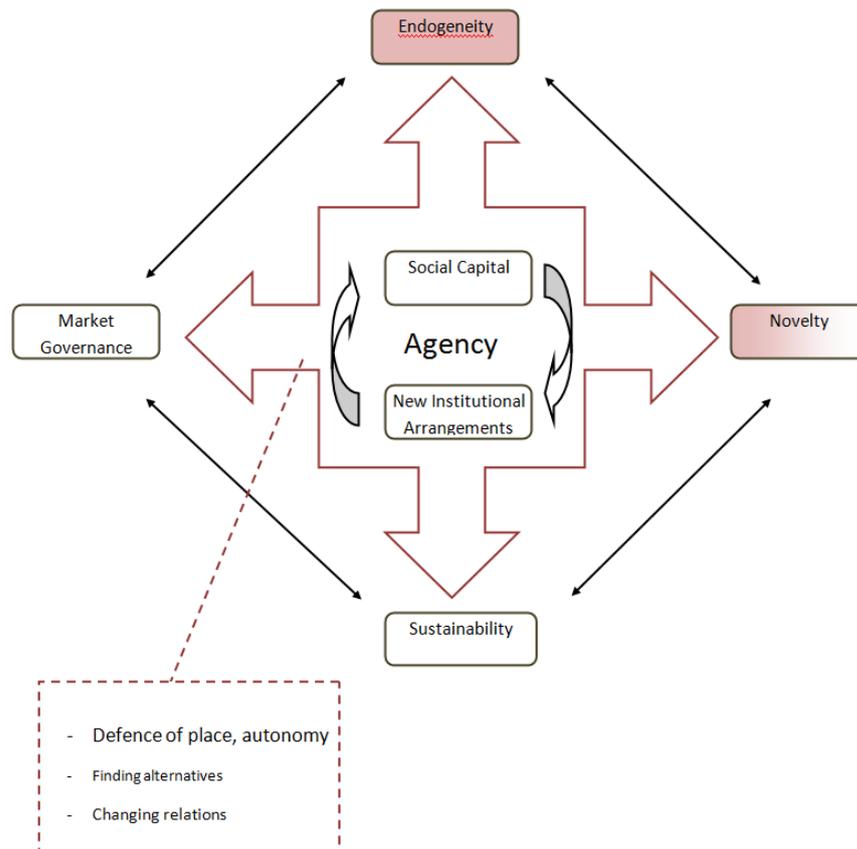
Looking at the rural webs of these initiatives, an important difference can be seen between the ANVs and the food cooperatives. While the ANVs focus mainly on the endogeneity dimension, the cooperatives additionally also focus on the market governance dimension. As well Vechtdalproducten as the cooperative Kempen Goed tries to market their products by emphasizing its endogeneity. Endogeneity is hereby seen in the use of local resources and the attempt to control the revenues coming from the sale of these resources. In the case of the ANVs the endogeneity dimension is focused on in another way; local control of the lands is the main motivation for both of the ANVs. Although the execution of landscape and nature conservation management is often in the hands of the ANVs, the decision making on what to execute is still in the hands of the local governments who provides for funding. Local control is therefore not yet in the hands of the ANV and therefore endogeneity of these ANVs is still rather narrowly interpreted.

Next to a focus on endogeneity, ANV de Ommer Marke has also focused in its practices on the novelty dimension. By focusing on novelties, this ANV has gained in agency in the past and still today this is an important focus point of this ANV.



**Figure 15: Rural web of the cooperatives**

The other figure shows the web for the ANVs of the two region. Both have a very strong focus on endogeneity. While the Ommer Marke has also a strong focus on innovation, which is shown in the highlighted dimension. The focus of these ANVs point to a type of agency of defence of place and autonomy and also towards changing relationships.



**Figure 16: Rural web of the ANVs**

## Practices

The points on which these initiatives can be compared most interestingly, is on their practices, because they differ substantially. Although the two ANVs both work together with municipalities in the form of contracts, in which the municipalities pay the ANVs for the maintenance of certain natural elements. ((Stimuleringskader) Groenblauwe Diensten), the food cooperatives' practices mainly focus on producing for the regional market.

The cooperatives in both regions have many similarities in terms of their practices. They both are involved in certification methods and are looking for ways to get to the market for their products. Although the cooperative in het Vechtdal is currently more focused on their shared vision, they are also looking for ways to reach the food market. Another similarity of the two cooperatives is that they try to incorporate other parties in the food distribution chain as members of the cooperative. In de Kempen a food distributing party is included. They provide the cooperative with a link to the catering industry and thereby enlarge their market. The cooperative in het Vechtdal also wants to include other parties in the cooperative. Restaurants, campsites and other sellers of Vechtdal products will become members of the cooperative. In both these cooperatives the complete food chain can be coordinated more easily and the control over this food chain increases. This can also be seen as a reaction against the loss of control that is mentioned by respondents as a motivation to start with this alternative way of food production. By taking back control over the food chain, these cooperatives would like to be more independent or autonomous, in the way that DeFilippis (1999) has seen it. Autonomy in this notion relates to

*“the ever-contested and never complete ability of those within the locality to control the institutions and relationships that define and produce the locality.” (p. 980).*

The ambition towards this kind of autonomy seems to drive both the food cooperatives.

When comparing the ANVs to the cooperatives, the control over the practices seems to be very different for the two types of initiatives. In the cooperatives an important aim is to get more control over the food chain in order to take a more independent position in the food market. For the ANVs, practices are not so much dependent on the market, but more on the local government. Nature and landscape are public goods and are usually paid for by governments. Therefore the control over these practices is also more situated with these governments. The institutional environment determines on which practices the ANVs should focus in the execution of these contracts. This is very different from the cooperatives that mainly have to deal with the market in which it tries to take a better position. One can still argue whether cooperatives are not just as dependent, but then on the rules of the market. While in the case of the ANV, the party who grants the subsidy decides which practices are executed, in the case of a cooperative the rules of the market decide which practices are executed. Both these initiatives are dependent on the structure they are a part of, whether this is a market environment or an institutional environment. By getting away from a dependent position, and by changing the relationships with these structures, these initiatives can show agency. Although this is still in process, the goals that the initiatives are formulating, keeping value in the beginning of the food chain, limiting the amount of parties in the food chain, keeping control over the prices of products, trying to work towards more independent financial position for the ANVs. All these attempts add up to an increased independence of the environment of these initiatives.

This focus on changing relationships connects very well to what is defined as agency given by Brennan and Luloff (2007) who see agency as

*"the process of building relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite and act (p.54).*

By building relationships with external parties (restaurants, food distributors) the food cooperatives increase the decision making power, which they had lost in the standard food market in which producers are mainly suppliers of products.

In this more local food market, the control over this market and its relationships is increased and agency can be shown. Also for the ANVs, the increased bridging links that are sought in the region can be seen as working towards more influence in the region by making links. This also connects very well to the definition of agency given by Sewell (1992)

*"exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree"(p.20).*

The effort that both the cooperatives as well as the associations are making in gaining control over their relationships and turning the current dependent position towards a more controlling position, relates very much to the ways in which agency is framed and seen throughout the years. This development starts with a change in the relationships. For the cooperatives they change their position from a supplier only, with no decision making in the supply chain to an actor with more decision making power in the supply chain. The food producers have seen their position worsened in the food market, due to intensification and large scale food production. They have become objects in this world food market, in which the price is determined by the food cooperatives and the world market. When producing for a regional market, products with an added value, the producers themselves can decide again on the price and the production methods. By organizing around a brand, these producers try to regain their position in the food market. By producing, distributing and sometimes even selling the food themselves, the producers are gaining decision making power in all of the phase of the food chain. Although they are still dependent on the willingness of the people to buy their products, they can at least decide themselves on their products, the distribution and the prices.

For the associations, this increased position can be seen as moving from an executor of nature and landscape policy towards an equal partner with the governments who can also decide on this policy. The initiatives are all working towards a more independent position, but are not there yet. Attempts by ANV de Ommer Marke in getting additional income by selling wood can be seen as practices that somewhat decrease the dependent financial position of the ANVs. Although it seems as if for the food cooperatives, this road towards more agency and autonomy seems possible (the beginning of a local food market is beginning to take shape), for the ANVs this road seems to be somewhat longer still. They are also more dependent on the room that is given to them by the institutional environment.

### *Typologies*

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An interesting similarity between the two ANVs is that they both are motivated out of a commitment to the land. Both of these associations were motivated out of a motivation to keep lands in the hands of farmers and defending this place against external influences was something to strive for. Becoming independent from either of those external influences, these ANVs both saw the benefits of keeping and taking control over the lands. This connects very well to the notion of defence of place that Escobar (2001) also talks about. By aspiring control over the lands, the ANVs are motivated out of an ambition to keep the control in the hands of the local farmers and citizens and hereby shape their places

Another similarity between the ANVs is that they both see themselves as mediators in the field; they both are looking for ways to anticipate on the changes in the CAP in which a regional collective seems to become an important mediating party. Bridging social capital is therefore also focused on in both associations in order to acquire such a position in the region. This extends somewhat the defence of place by Escobar and focuses more on the relationships that stretch beyond the region that are important in order to be able to defend the place. Although the inner motivation comes from the strong bond to the place, the way to keep control over the place is by changing relationships. So although Escobar is right to say that studying place is important in keeping control, the methods to show this agency stretch beyond the boundaries of the region. A relational approach is therefore more useful when looking at the ways in which agency is expressed, while the territorial notion is useful in looking at the reasons for agency to occur in the first place.

For the cooperatives, agency is mainly expressed by creating alternative economies and even more specifically by creating nested markets, as sketched by van der Ploeg et al. (2012) Both the cooperatives are looking for an alternative to the global food market. Although the de-monopolizing effect on the global food market that van van der Ploeg et al. (2012) write about is yet to be seen, new governance structures, new relationships with market parties and a new food market are all beginning to take shape for these cooperatives.

Also for these cooperatives, changing relationships remains crucial in the expression of agency. These cooperatives have to look for new ways to sell their products and therefore new relationships have to be created. The cooperative Kempen Goed for example is linked to the regular food market by the food distributor they have included in their cooperative, which helps them to link their new market to the regular food market. Both of the initiatives also try to be more in control over the relationships with the market for food production as said before. By including external parties (food distributor, restaurants) into their cooperatives, control is growing and agency is expressed via the changes made in relationships in the food chain.

Overall looking at the initiatives, their webs and the type of agency they are showing, it seems as if a mix between the three typologies is evident. The ANVs are mostly motivated out of a reaction towards external influences; keeping control over the lands is central in this. The cooperatives on the other hand focus mainly on creating an alternative niche to the global processes, which can exist next to these global processes. So instead of a reaction against, the cooperative shows their agency more by giving an alternative to the current food system. Even more so, the cooperatives also link up with

these global processes in order to survive; the cooperatives make use of the trends in the food market towards more attention for regional products. These different strategies and different types of agency also make sense, because of the difference in the goals of these initiatives. While ANVs are negotiating over land and their maintenance which is public affair which deals with many interests, the cooperatives are looking for a share in the market for food, which is something that can be more easily reached. These different scopes also require different forms of agency.

This also shows the importance of changing relationships, which can be seen for as well the cooperatives as for the ANVs. This is especially important because the global structures are also not static and that these also change. For the ANVs the position that they take in the region in the light of the coming CAP is crucial for their practices and consequentially for their agency of the next years. Also the cooperatives can, by taking a position in the changing food market, increase their market potential and agency in the future. For these initiatives it is therefore important to also anticipate on the changing global structures in order to express agency. This form of agency, changing relations, might therefore be seen as crucial for both types of initiatives, so for all the cases studied in this thesis.

Overall looking at the different typologies of agency shown, they all relate to the notion of neo-endogenous development, which was the starting point of my theoretical framework. I therefore agree with Jonas (2012) who has said that the territorial as well as the relational reading of place is important in studying agency of regions. While the territorial focus has allowed me to look at the motivation and drive for agency to even start to develop, the use of elements of the relational approach has allowed me to see that the change of relationships is most crucial in the expression of agency and in getting the preconditions right. As was seen in figure 3 collective agency is dependent on the one hand on the unstructured preconditions: motivation vision and social energy and on the other hand by more structured preconditions, such as resources and schemas. While the territorial approach allowed me to see the importance of these unstructured preconditions, the relational approach was useful in identifying the more structured preconditions for agency. In order to get a complete picture, I still think that both approaches are useful. Focusing on one of the two approaches only would have missed important information in finding the agency in these regions.

In the rural web, the two approaches more or less come together. While the web itself focuses on a territory and therefore also is automatically territorial in its approach, the relationships between the dimensions of the web showed the importance of relationships for strengthening this web. Agency is especially shown in the ways in which the web is more or less connected. So while the web itself is territorial in nature, it still emphasizes the importance of the relationships within this web.

In this way the initiatives can work towards more local autonomy as envisaged by DeFilippis (1999) by working more towards control of the institutions and relationships that define and produce the locality. The relationships therefore seems to be crucial in order to reach to a situation in which agency is rested more in the region itself and one can start to speak of an autonomous geography: a region in which *reciprocal and mutually agreed relations with others* are key.

### *Possibilities, constraints*

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The different types of initiatives also experience different constraints and possibilities. While the cooperatives mainly face constraint in the process of getting to the market for regional products, the ANVs face most constraints in getting paid for the maintenance of nature and landscape conservation. These constraints are at a different level. While the cooperatives work in a niche environment in which the ways in procedures should still be developed, agricultural nature and landscape conservation is much more structured and institutionally embedded than the niche food market. For the cooperatives, the producers face other norms, values and constraints in this new market, than they were used to. Knowledge about this new market and the way to relate to customers is a resource that is seen as helpful skills in these cooperatives, which they have not needed before. They have entered a different market in which different rules of the game are important; the running of a cooperative is different from the running of a farm.

For the ANVs, the change in practices and initiatives might not be as rigorous. Although they as well change their practices and farming methods, this is more structured and institutionally embedded. The local government has maintenance to be done, and the ANVs are there to execute this maintenance. Although the ANVs are looking for ways to increase their decision making power and obtain a more dependent position, at this moment, these ANVs are mainly executors of nature and landscape maintenance.

The difference in position leads to different constraints. While the ANVs mainly struggles to get their labour paid, and is looking for ways to get the execution of the work done (manpower, money, time), the cooperatives are next to these resources also constrained by their lack of knowledge and know-how of the new food market. This also leads to the conclusion that a more independent position, which shows more agency, can also lead to a bigger strain on resources and capacities of the initiatives. Bigger responsibilities lead to a bigger need for resources and capacities. This puts the initiatives back in a more dependent position, from which they are trying to get away. This balance between trying to be more independent and still being dependent of the institutional environment is also something that is not easily solved. In the recommendations I will go into this more thoroughly.

### 11.3 Other results

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Next to the comparison between the two regions and the initiatives, this thesis has also shown other results regarding the different attributes of agency: vision and motivation, practices and the rural web. In this paragraph I will look at each of these attributes of agency and what they can tell about agency in these cases.

#### *Vision*

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In each of the initiatives, shared vision and motivation have been important for the initiative to get ahead. Especially for bottom-up initiatives that are operating in new environments, it is specifically important to be in one line with each other. The changed environment (e.g. new networks for producers to tap into and new nature friendly methods for agricultural businesses to commit to) already involved more risks for the initiatives. The agri-environmental association, de Ommer Marke has also mentioned the importance of keeping to its vision, especially when dealing with policy changes. An insecure environment can therefore be an extra motivation for initiatives to have a clear vision. This new environment could on the other hand also make it harder for the initiative to find full commitment for a certain goal. As seen with Vechtdalproducten some people would find the risk too big to participate in the cooperative. A clear vision can therefore be seen as on the one hand challenging the initiative and its potential members, but on the other hand also makes this shared vision and commitment to this vision even more important to become sustainable.

Although the general lines and goals may be shared, the Vechtdalproducten case also shows that it is important to make clear which strategy and which plan the initiative is going for. The difference in vision has led to distrust in the group and overall decreased the social capital levels and resulted in a lack of energy in the group. Investing in a shared vision and plan is now seen as the first step on the road to further development of the cooperative. Shared vision can thus certainly be seen as a prerequisite before any sort of agency can be shown.

#### *Practices*

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When comparing the four cases on their practices, it becomes clear that practices are seen as important ways to show agency and are important in the development of an initiative. This is most clearly shown in the case of de Ommer Marke in which practices could be directly related to the development and attractiveness of the association to new members. The association was only “alive” when practices were executed and people could see these practices. ANV Kempenland also purposively focused on practices to be able to show agency and attract new members.

Another difference that could be witnessed regarding the practices is between the two ANVs. While the ANV Kempenland is mainly involved in the execution of this outsourced nature

management activities, its counterpart from het Vechtdal is involved in more activities than executing these contracts. This could on the one hand have to do with the youthfulness of the ANV in de Kempen; they are just beginning to develop their bridging social capital, while the ANV in Ommen has built up these contacts over the last twenty years. On the other hand, the ANV in Ommen is also more involved and more focused on innovative practices than the ANV in de Kempen is. By anticipating on certain policy developments and looking for innovative practices, this ANV also seems to look for more practices. It seems as if due to the youthfulness of the ANV and also due to the less innovative nature the agency of de ANV in de Kempen is more limited than the ANV in Ommen. Being limited in their practices, ANV Kempenland shows less agency than its partner in het Vechtdal is showing.

## 11.4 Constraints and possibilities

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### Possibilities

Comparing the four initiatives, they all identify quite similar constraints and possibilities. First it is good to mention the possibilities that are seen to enable agency for these initiatives. This seems to be primarily linked to practices, leadership and social energy. Although when asking respondent about their possibilities and constraints, the constraints are often most easily named, reading between the lines, the opportunities and successes for agency of the initiatives mainly lie in the sphere of doing. For making the initiatives more able to practice, the key seems to lie in people; on the most local level. In the end, the successful initiatives were dependent on the people that have made this possible; the leaders and bonding social capital in het Vechtdal and the coalition of the willing in de Kempen. These people were responsible for the energy that was created in these initiatives. Therefore when looking at possibilities, the people themselves have been responsible for the biggest possibilities.

### Constraints in resources

Next to the possibilities created by the people themselves, the structures surrounding the people have also made a difference. As mentioned before, the institutional environment has been crucial for de Kempen cases to even exist. Although I still think that for agency to be expressed, the people and their relationships are more central, these institutional structures have been very important for the initiatives in de Kempen to even be founded.

Besides the possibilities, constraints are also mentioned by many respondents. They all seem to lack human resources; often too little people are involved and the ones that do put in time and energy are often overworked. Most of the involved active members in the initiatives also have their own business or farm to take care of. The voluntary nature of the initiatives is seen as constraining the professional capacity of the initiatives.

For the non-human resources, the cases would all like some more resources. Time, money and manpower are all seen as constraint. Although money is by most respondents not seen as a solution, but more seen as useful in the start-up phase of an initiative.

Money is also seen as a good way for some of the initiatives to be able to hire professional capacity for as well the ANVs as for the cooperatives. For the ANVs however the biggest constraint is still seen in getting paid for the nature and landscape management. While in the past subsidies are often used to pay for this, being dependent on subsidies means a very dependent position. Both of these ANVs are looking for novel ways to get their labour paid and be able to keep their agency.

### *Other possibilities, constraints*

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Next to these human and more physical resources, the boundaries of a region can offer constraints for the initiatives in multiple ways. First of all, the region on which the initiative focuses does not always link with the region that the people identify themselves with. De Ommer Marke for example has started from a smaller region of the municipality of Ommen and now looks for ways to

expand the region by collaborating with other municipalities and working towards Vechtdalwide cooperation. ANV Kempenland on the other hand has started from the complete region of de Kempen and has a hard time finding members and commitment to this ANV. The choice for a certain region seems to be important in the success and level of commitment of the local people; in a region that suits most closely to the region in the minds of the potential members, energy is most easily organized.

In another sense, the cooperatives are also influenced by these same boundaries. For the cooperative Kempen Goed the boundaries of the region limit the amount of producers that can become a member of the cooperative. Also for Vechtdalproducten, the strictness of these boundaries is seen as a possible constraint. So for both the cooperatives as the ANVs, the territorial notion of a region is important for its agency. In general, territories and places matter for people and consequently for the amount of energy that can be generated in a region. Sense of place of the people, as introduced by Massey (1994) can therefore enable agency. Also the endogeneity of the products and their region-specific qualities are used to add value to regional products as was clearly done in both cooperatives. Hereby the endogenous nature of the products is used to add value and is also connected to taste and quality of products.

This links to the debate and dilemma of the relational versus the territorial notion of place. These regions are administratively constructed and this does not seem to relate to the relational character of the practices in this region, which cross territorial boundaries of the region. Moreover, in the construction of the identities of the region, this administrative region does not connect to what is perceived as the region by the people living in it. So while on the one hand the territorial notion of place is useful in understanding the connection that people feel with the place as a physical territorial space, a too narrow focus on this bounded region, neglects the extra-territorial relationships to this place. This makes the concept of neo-endogenous development useful, because this concept looks first at the local bound in the region, but also takes into account the relationships from the locality to the outer world. A weak point of a too strict focus on a bounded territorial approach is the minor role it has for place identities, which Massey (1994) also refers to. People do not automatically identify themselves to the administratively bounded territory that institutions want them to identify with. Places can be framed differently by institutions than they are felt by the people. As was seen with the different initiatives, commitment to the land is not steered by external institutional arrangements, but is constructed by the people in the region. This might also be different for different people living in the region. People perceive regions and their boundaries differently, and this clashes with the division that is made by institutions.

Another more general constraint that is seen by the initiatives lies more in the sphere of schemas. The initiatives also experience a gap between their schema and the schema of the government. Being practitioners, the initiatives experience a lack of understanding from the authorities for the work they are doing. Also the other way around, the initiatives do not understand why some processes and decisions need that much time and deliberation. The worlds of these people are too much apart. For the more business-minded respondents of the cooperatives, these worlds seem to be even more apart; they consider the gap between a governmental attitude and an entrepreneurial attitude as even bigger. Collaborations from the initiatives with governments are seen as restraining the development of the initiative. This also refers to the tension that is witnessed by Horlings (2010) and what she refers to as different types of logic. While the institutional logic of the local government is based on deliberating with multiple partners and also dealing with rules and regulations to gain carrying capacity before deciding, for the initiatives the logic is more based upon practices and getting to results. These two logics clash when these worlds interact.

Another constraint that is experienced by more initiatives has to do with governments, policy and regulations. Especially ANV de Ommer Marke that looks for novel practices and therefore inevitably faces the boundaries of regulations, the changes in policy and regulations are seen as

constraining the innovative nature of the ANV. Also for other initiatives the slowness of procedures with the governments are seen as restrictive, especially with initiatives that focus on innovation.

These constraints and possibilities altogether have led to what one of the respondents has mentioned a loss of energy for some of the initiative. While vision and enthusiasm are important in the beginning phase of the initiative, practices become the way to express agency, the energy that was available can also be taken away by these constraining resources or structures.



## 12. Conclusions

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After looking at the different elements of agency in these different regions and have compared them to each other, I can now conclude on my findings and give an answer to the different research questions and primarily to the following question:

*“In which way do bottom-up initiatives express agency in order to develop their regions in their preferred way?”*

### **Practices = Agency**

The most important indicator for agency was and still is practices. What was already seen by Paasi (2010) is also reflected in the results of this thesis. By showing results, an initiative is alive, attracts attention and members and creates “energy” among the members. When an initiative is in the position to practice what they have intended to do, agency is showed most clearly. The other way around, when practices are minimal, the initiative loses its energy and consequently its agency.

### **Rural web as an expression of agency**

The webs of the different regions and initiatives show different pictures, which can be seen as different ways to express agency. These rural webs show the dimensions in which the initiatives express their agency and also show the importance of social capital and institutional arrangements, which sketch the structural environments of the initiatives.

### **Social capital and Institutional arrangements**

The study of these rural webs has clearly shown the dominance of either the social capital or the institutional dimension. The most important difference can be seen in the dominance of the institutional arrangements in de Kempen compared to het Vechtdal where the emphasis is more on the social capital dimension (mainly bonding social capital).

An explanation for either an emphasis on social capital or on institutional arrangements could relate to the schemas (soft structures) as well as the institutional environment (hard structures) of the two regions. The history that the Kempen has in collaborating is also reflected in its schema, which in this region has led to a more organized institutional environment. In het Vechtdal, the importance of the social capital dimension is combined with a less dominant institutional environment. This also relates to the dominant schema in this region that emphasizes good relationships and trust. The historical preference and schemas of these two regions and the matching differences in institutional environments lead to different environments for the initiatives in these regions.

It is hard to say whether the one scenario is to be preferred over the other from the eyes of the initiatives. What can be said is that by the prominence of the institutional arrangements, the chances for initiatives in de Kempen to access new bridging social capital and access new information has become easier. For the initiatives in het Vechtdal access to new resources is more dependent on the capacities and skills of the people of the initiatives. An institutional environment that facilitates the initiatives more as seen in de Kempen can make the initiatives less dependent on the internal social capital dimension. In other words, the dominance of either social capital or institutional arrangements in the web of an initiative could on the one hand open up opportunities, but could also lead to dependence on this dimension. Endurance or sustainability of either social capital levels or of the institutional arrangements is in these cases crucial for the agency of the initiatives.

### **Leadership**

Another important finding is that leadership seems to adjust to the region that the initiative is in and also to the phase that the initiative is in. Successful leaders in a region should therefore be aware

of the regional specificities to be able to facilitate in a right way and also be aware of the phase that the initiative is in. In a region where agency is mainly practiced through bridging social capital and linking networks, the leadership style will also adjust to this modus, while in region where strong social bonds are more important, leadership styles will also adjust to this way of expressing agency. The type of leadership that is needed is also dependent on the phase that the initiative is in. While an initiative in its start-up phase needs an enthusiastic type of leader, in a later stage a leader can help to find bridging links and a networking leadership style is preferred.

All cases have shown agency especially in some dimensions of the rural web. A commonality for all cases can be found in the shared focus on financial sustainability and endogeneity. The economic focus can be explained by the need of the initiatives to sustain themselves independently. The focus on endogeneity is interesting, because it points as well to the importance of the physical space and also to the meaning that the place has for the initiatives. Another commonality can be found between cooperatives and ANVs. While cooperatives focus on endogeneity in combination with market governance, the ANVs focus mainly on the endogeneity dimension alone. Another thing that was evident after the analysis is that a focus on innovation as was seen with de Ommer Marke combined with the ability to show practices has been positive for the agency of this initiative. Agency that is shown in the dimension of innovation can also have a positive effect on the further practices that the initiative works on and can therefore work as a trigger for agency. Innovative practices further trigger the initiative to become even more agentic.

## Preconditions

After having looked at the agency, expressed through practices, the other important element for agency to be expressed is having the right preconditions. The first crucial factor is seen in the visions and motivations of the involved actors.

### Visions and actors/institutions

For the initiatives, vision and motivation is seen as crucial precondition for further agency to develop. For all the initiatives it also helped when the vision is backed up by institutional environments. As was seen in both het Vechtdal as in de Kempen, the initiatives are supported by their institutional environment (province, municipality, ZLTO) and hereby can access important resources.

### Structured preconditions

Going further down the conceptual framework, schemas and resources (both structured preconditions) were also identified as important preconditions for agency. This research has shown that both these structural elements have influenced the capacity for agency in these regions.

### Schemas

The “softer” structures influenced the agency in the region in the form of mentalities, but maybe even more so, by a regional way of doing. This does not refer to a specific culture in these regions, but is more about the general unwritten rules, or schemas that are shared in a region. First of all, I do not claim to have found a full description of the mentalities or culture of these regions. I do think I have found constraints and opportunities for agency that have to do with the schemas and regional histories of these regions. This makes that for het Vechtdal good relationships, trust and bonding social capital have shown to be crucial for the initiatives and prerequisites for agency to be expressed and also values by the people living in het Vechtdal. For de Kempen on the other hand bridging links and collaboration are more focused on and looked for as ways to express agency. This has contributed to making it possible for the region to develop a network as het Huis van de Brabantse Kempen in which access to different parties and knowledge provides a good basis for the initiatives to develop and form a good environment for agency to develop. The institutional density of de Kempen compared to het Vechtdal could therefore be explained by a combination of this difference

in schemas, and also a regional specific way of dealing with issues. In het Vechtdal the emphasis on bonding social capital can be seen in light of the importance of relationships and trust in this region. The schemas in these regions have therefore resulted in a certain path dependency in these regions. The past events in a region have become a schema for the region that has influenced the future capacity for agency in this region. Having knowledge of this schema is crucial in becoming an initiative with agency.

### Resources

Next to the schemas, other human and non-human resources, such as time, manpower and money influence the capacity to act in these regions. They shape the structural environment and can become important factors for initiatives to become and remain capable to act. Although resources might be useful and important, the initiatives have felt constrained by the lack of these resources, these preconditions were not seen as the most important for becoming agentic; other constraints are often felt as more crucial.

Another constraint or possibility has more to do with the territorial nature of the region; the boundedness of the regions. By focusing on a region, the initiatives on the one hand enlarge their potential links and collaborations inside this region and create energy and commitment in this region, but on the other hand this also has the risk of losing commitment and energy when this region does not fit the sense of place of the people living in it. The boundedness of the region is therefore crucial in creating or losing agency for the initiative. This emphasizes the need to look at agency in regions from as well the relational perspective (in order to see the relationships and dependencies within and beyond the region) as from the territorial perspective (to see that the boundedness of region also influences the commitment and energy in the regions).

### Linking with the theory

Overall when linking these results to the theoretical framework, agency also in these cases seems to be expressed first and foremost by practices. But next to these practices, the preconditions are very important to understand the different regional development paths of regions. As was seen in the conceptual framework motivation and vision seems to certainly be important for agency to show as was said by Bandura (2006) and Dietz and Burns (1992). The other more structured preconditions were also in this study identified as important for showing agency. The division that I have made between the schemas and resources also made sense in the study of these regions. While the “soft” schemas in the form of schemas and the regional modus of development was important, also the more “hard” structures, human (skills and capacities) as well as non-human (money, time etc.) resources were important structural elements that influence the agency of the initiatives.

Regarding the rural web, social capital as well as new institutional arrangements seems to be central in the web, depending on the region. Although the two dimensions both are important, the basis from which collaboration, energy and consequently agency is formed seems more situated in the social capital dimension than in the institutional dimension. While bonding social capital can form the basis and centre of collaborations, bridging social capital can become the entrance to new connections, information and new institutional arrangements. This emphasizes once again the centrality of relationships in creating agency. While an institutional arrangement can form a facilitating environment for initiatives, the social capital present in the initiative will in the end determine whether practices and consequently agency will be performed. The institutional arrangements can therefore still be seen as belonging to the structural environment and as crucial in the practice and consequently in the agency of the initiatives.

The focus for agency is then back to seeing agency as changing relationships, which is also shown by Massey (2004). Although the cooperatives also focus on looking for alternatives and the ANVs are mainly involved with a defence of place, all the initiatives show agency in the change they make in relationships. In this way, the practice can influence the structure, instead of the structure only being able to influence the practice, as seen in the structuration theory by Giddens.

In the cases in which the initiatives are able to influence the structures from its practices, is where agency is at its best. These can be seen in the attempts of the food cooperatives to influence the relationships they have with the buyers of food and thereby improve their position in the food market. Also the attempts of the associations to gain a position as a collective for the coming CAP can be seen as a way to improve the position in the wider network of relationships that these ANVs are in. In these ambitions lies the willingness of the initiatives to become more independent and to improve their position in their structural environment. This form of agency can be seen as the form in which agency is able to change the structure by showing practice, as seen in the structuration theory by Giddens.

This brings me back to the central dilemma of this thesis: agency versus structure. What I have shown in this thesis is that agency nor structure is the most important, but the relationship between the two is the most important. Structure influences agency (as seen in the enabling institutional environment in de Kempen) but agency can also influence the structure. Agency is, I think the strongest when structures are influenced by practices. This is when by the definition by Brennan and Luloff (2007) local people are able to build relationships that increase the capacity of local people to unite and act. But even goes a step further and looks more as the agency as Sewell (1992) has formulated it:

*“exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree”*(p.20).

So while agency of bottom-up initiatives starts with practices of the people (with their motivation, high social capital levels, leaders etc.), in order to keep these initiatives agentic, transforming the relationships within and beyond the region become the most important method in keeping energy and agency in the initiative and eventually being able to change the structures.

### 13. Recommendations

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In this last chapter I will look specifically at the possible role of governments and policy in this movement from the bottom-up and hereby give an answer to the last research question. Looking at the developments as sketched in the introduction, the further decentralization and changing role of the nation state, calls for more self-governance and opens up opportunities for bottom-up initiatives in regions. This would suggest that the initiatives should also look for ways in which agency can be expressed and in which way this can happen for years to come. Essential for this to happen, is to internally be in one line. Also, social capital, bonding in the first place and bridging in the second place, are crucial for an initiative to become sustainable. Without bonding social capital there is no initiative and without bridging links there are no practices. Institutional arrangements can only play a contextual role as facilitator. Therefore I think, that institutions must **first look at what people themselves can do**, and then look at what they can facilitate and how they should do this. Knowledge of the schemas and regional way of doing is crucial in this facilitation.

I think it is also important for policy makers and governments to **be aware of the internal dynamics in a region**. I would plea to step away from a one-size-fits-all methodology and move towards meeting the needs of the initiatives. This follows also from the emphasis that needs to be given to places as territories that give meaning to the people living in it. These people identify themselves and commit themselves to this region and their motivation to develop this region and show agency is dependent on this connection to the place. Place matters for initiatives, so when developing visions for stimulating bottom-up initiatives, these places and their boundaries should be taken seriously. Sense of place cannot be constructed administratively, but is felt on the local level. In the coming changes in the CAP and the emphasis there will probably be on nature and landscape collectives in sub national regions, I do not think that we can assume that people will feel committed to these regions automatically. I do see opportunities in collaborations between different local groups, as is being done with the Ommer Marke, where from the region Ommen now slowly the region is collaborating with neighbouring groups. This is initiated from the bottom-up and not steered from the top down. In order to keep commitment and ownership of the land, I think, it is important to keep connected with the sense of place of the people in order to keep the energy with the initiative.

Next to this geographic sensitivity, I also think that different **types of initiatives need different kinds of support**. For ANVs, increasing local control could be a big step towards more ownership and in the end more agency. Local control would then go beyond the mere execution of landscape and nature management, but also involve the actual decision making and financial control over this management. For other initiatives such as the cooperatives, bigger changes need to be undertaken for which expertise knowledge from external partners could be more useful and facilitation and providing an enabling environment could be valuable changes made by the institutional environment. As seen in the analysis, the different types of initiatives also face different kind of constraints in their environments for which the institutional environment can provide support.

This also connects to the fact that people and their initiatives should also be seen as equally capable or maybe even more capable of making decisions for their locality than government officials. They often have more knowledge of the locality and of its schemas, to be able to effectively stimulate development. More equality would also mean more responsibilities and ownership for these initiatives, which would put them in a more independent position. The case studies of the ANVs all point to an uneasy balance between dependence and independence from the initiatives towards their environment. I believe that if these initiatives would be given more freedom, more

responsibilities and more real (financial) ownership, that the initiatives would become more capable to act and gain in agency.

Although I see agency mainly to be expressed from the internal dynamics of an initiative, I certainly do not want to rule out the role of institutions. Even in het Vechtdal, where focus is mostly on bonding social capital, the facilitation by institutions in advice and support, offers a possible solution to the vision crisis that this initiative has been in. Even more so, it is also interesting to see that when focusing on a bigger region, the initiatives often create their own institutions. (e.g. the lands that have formed the Kempen and also the ANVs in het Vechtdal that are collaborating as an umbrella). It seems as if for bigger regions, the initiatives set up their own institutional environment. Therefore there still seems to be a need for an institutional support structure.

Another factor that is important for the agency of initiatives is schemas. When designing policy to stimulate initiatives, I think it is important to be **aware of these cultural differences**. While for the Kempen, emphasis could be placed on creating commitment and bonding social capital and connecting to the bridging social capital what is already there, in het Vechtdal policy can stimulate the linkages between different sectors, while making use of bonding relationships. Awareness of schemas and cultural differences are important for facilitating these initiatives. I therefore believe that in order to stimulate bottom-up development, institutions should connect more with the initiatives to be able to facilitate in a useful way. Governments should be aware of the energy that is in these initiatives and see the opportunities that these initiatives offer for regional development, especially in times of austerity and economic crises. This would require a completely different relationship between the government and society. Instead of designing plans and implement them to the people, government should be more in contact with people and initiatives in order to only complement when necessary.

With regard to the coming CAP, the focus on Community Led Local Development is assuring. As seen from the different initiatives, a facilitative environment can certainly help, but the energy and the agency must come from the social capital and internal strength of the initiatives. Looking back at the aims of the European Commission of 2011, the focus on community capacity, bottom-up approaches, ownership and innovation can only be encouraged. The question of how to make this happen is maybe more important and relevant, but a primary focus on the change from the bottom-up seems to benefit the potential for agency. I think that geographic sensitivity, which includes sensitivity for different schemas, combined with an understanding for the specific needs and recognition of the qualities of the initiatives is crucial to start with for governments and this CAP to be of help.

Looking at these two regions, it seems as if especially the ANVs are already looking at ways how to make use of the coming chances for agricultural nature conservation. Both of these associations are already looking for region wide cooperation and are linking up with other parties in the region. It is to be seen whether these regions will be sufficiently constructed from the bottom-up and not too much steered administratively by the money streams coming from Brussels which deal only with bigger sized regions. The plans force the different ANVs to collaborate on a regional scale and from the experiences with Vechtdalproducten (in which a big pile of money also urged people to collaborate, what eventually led to a breakdown of social capital), I do not believe this is the right way to stimulate regional development. It is the challenge of the ANVs to show agency in this phase, by being able to change the relationships in these regions in order to take a position in the structural environment that is at the moment being shaped, while keeping commitment to the land. In order to practice agency in these structurally changing environment, the capability of the initiatives to change and control relationships, is I think, crucial.

For further research, I would recommend to do more research in this field, but then taking a relational approach when looking at the agency of bottom-up initiatives. In this thesis I have found it difficult to connect the region to which the people felt that they connected to, to find their sense of place. By taking a territorial approach and asking people in the context of this bounded region, I felt that I have missed some energy in these initiatives, which could be identified more easily when my focus point were not these regions, but the initiatives and the people themselves. This would require a complete different set-up of the research, but I think, would lead to interesting insights in the relationship between people and the commitment and energy in relationship to the place (that is most probably a very different place than the places made up by the institutions).

Furthermore due to the explorative character of this research, I feel that there are some topics that deserve more attention in other research. For example more interesting questions can be answered with regard to the regional schemas. Although I have showed that this factor influences the agency of the initiatives and that knowledge of these schemas is useful in expressing agency, it would be interesting to see whether this is the case for more regions. Also how these schemas actually function in a region and if these schemas also change over time. This research domain of looking at the more cultural elements in regional development would certainly be an addition to understanding processes of regional development.



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## Appendix 1 Topic list first round of interviews

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- Allereerst vraag ik toestemming voor gebruik van citaten, ik geef aan dat ik voor zover mogelijk de resultaten anoniem verwerk en dat ik desgewenst de interview verslagen terug kan koppelen aan de respondent
- Ik stel mezelf voor en licht de inhoud van het onderzoek toe
- Ik vraag de respondent zich voor te stellen (naam en functie) en vraag wat zijn relatie is tot het gebied (oppassen voor uitloop)

### Achtergrond en visie

1. Welke initiatieven en plannen spelen er in de Kempen, het Vechtdal? (Eventueel doorvragen op bepaalde ontwikkelingen en doorvragen naar zowel overheidsplannen, plannen vanuit maatschappelijke organisaties en private initiatieven.
2. Worden het Vechtdal, de Kempen als één gebied gepercipieerd door jullie organisatie? Door de bewoners?
3. Wat is de geschiedenis van de gebiedsontwikkeling in het Vechtdal/de Kempen?
4. Wat is jullie visie op het gebied? (Vooral wanneer het gaat over voedsel, natuur en landschap)
5. Wat zijn andere (contrasterende) visies? En van wie?

### Betrokken partijen

6. Met welke partijen werkt uw organisatie, instantie samen in het Vechtdal/Kempen? Met welke niet?
7. Waar bestaat die samenwerking uit?
8. Met welke partijen niet?
9. Welke regionale initiatieven zijn er te onderscheiden in het gebied en wat doen ze?
  - vanuit de private sector, recreatie, toerisme, agrarische sector
  - vanuit maatschappelijke organisaties, LEADER, heemkundes, plaatselijke belang
  - vanuit de overheid, overheidsplannen, gemeentes, provincies?
11. Is er sprake van samenwerking binnen en tussen deze initiatieven? Op welke manier (bridging of bonding)?
12. Ziet u mogelijkheden voor verdere samenwerking of knelpunten voor samenwerking?
13. Wat is de rol van de overheid en beleid en regelgeving in deze initiatieven?
  - faciliterend: subsidie, andersoortige steun
  - samenwerking tussen initiatieven en overheden
  - weinig inmenging
  - beleidsruimte/regels
14. Wat zijn belemmerende factoren voor initiatieven in het gebied om hun doelen te realiseren?
  - gaat dit bijv meer om praktische middelen (bijv. geld, grond etc. of meer over menselijke kwaliteiten (samenwerking, leiderschap, doorzettingsvermogen, netwerkend vermogen etc.
15. Denkt u dat er wel of niet sprake is van een bepaalde mentaliteit in het gebied? Voor wie geldt die mentaliteit? Denkt u dat dat invloed heeft op de initiatieven?
16. Wat zijn belangrijke factoren voor lokale initiatieven om van de grond te komen en te blijven bestaan? Welke factoren zijn belangrijk voor een initiatief om hun doelen te kunnen bereiken?
17. Wie worden in het gebied als leiders ervaren? Waarin leiderschap staat voor het in staat zijn om allianties te smeden, ambities samen te brengen en vernieuwing te brengen?

18. Ik zal nu vier domeinen langsgaan, waarin regionale ontwikkeling is te ontdekken: Herkent u dat er ontwikkelingen spelen op dit gebied en wat zijn mogelijke knelpunten om deze domeinen te ontwikkelen?

- Duurzaamheid: Wat verstaat u onder duurzaamheid?  
Zijn initiatieven hier ook bezig met duurzaamheid, niet alleen op het gebied van ecologie, natuur en landschap, maar ook economische en sociale duurzaamheid, zodat de initiatieven ook voor de volgende generaties blijven bestaan.  
Op welke manier werken ze aan duurzaamheid?
- Endogeniteit: Op welke manier maken de initiatieven in het gebied van eigen kwaliteiten: bijv. Landschappelijk van het unieke landschap? Of van lokale cultuur, zoals lokaal voedsel. Op welke manier heeft de regio hier controle over en heeft het gebied hier baat bij?
- Op welke manier zijn initiatieven in staat om aan te sluiten bij de markt? Hoe verhouden initiatieven zich tot de reguliere markt, worden er nieuwe markten gecreeerd? (bv lokaal voedsel, toerisme etc.)
- Op welke manier spelen de initiatieven in op nieuwe ontwikkelingen: leren van andere regio's dmv netwerken, nieuwe kennis opdoen, vernieuwende praktijken, innovatie, uitvindingen

Wordt er binnen deze domeinen ook naar samenwerking gezocht tussen verschillende partijen: overheden, private partijen en maatschappelijke organisaties? En op welke manier?

## Appendix 2 Topic list second round of interviews with respondents from the initiatives

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- Toestemming voor opname, gebruik van citaten, ik geef aan dat ik de resultaten voor zover mogelijke anonimiteit verwerk en dat ik desgewenst de interview verslagen terugkoppel aan de respondent en wanneer ik het klaar heb een samenvatting kan sturen.
- Ik stel mezelf voor en licht de inhoud van mijn onderzoek toe
- Ik vraag de respondent zichzelf voor te stellen en wat zijn relatie tot het gebied

### **Achtergrond en visie van de regio (10)**

1. Welke ontwikkelingen spelen er op het moment in de regio?
2. Wat is de visie van uw organisatie op de ontwikkeling van de regio?
3. Zijn er ook visies die contrasteren met het uwe? En van wie zijn die?

### **Achtergrond van het initiatief (10)**

4. Hoe is het initiatief ontstaan?
5. Wat zijn de doelen en ambities?
6. Op welke manier zetten jullie deze doelen om naar de praktijk naar activiteiten?

### **Praktijken (5)**

7. Wat zijn jullie voornaamste activiteiten?
8. Wat hebben jullie bereikt in het verleden?
9. Op welke manier sluiten deze praktijken aan bij het behalen van jullie doelen?

### **Sociaal Kapitaal**

#### **Samenwerking (5)**

10. Met wie/welke organisaties werken jullie samen?
11. Waar bestaat de samenwerking uit?
12. Met wie werken jullie minder of niet samen en waarom?

#### **Leiderschap (5)**

13. Wie worden er als leiders ervaren? Definitie geven van leiderschap  
Leiderschap zie ik als een individu of een groep met mensen die cruciaal zijn in de ontwikkeling van een gebied die in staat zijn om mensen te mobiliseren rond gedeelde ambities, in staat is om allianties te smeden en om vernieuwend bezig te zijn.
14. Op welke manier wordt dit gedaan? En hoe beïnvloedt dit de organisatie?

#### **Instituties (15)**

15. Op welke manier worden het bereiken van jullie doelen en jullie praktijken beïnvloedt door **overheden** (gemeentes, provincie, het Rijk) en door welke overheden?
  - a. Samenwerking
  - b. Subsidies
  - c. Andersoortige steun
  - d. Beleid en regelgeving
16. Op welke manier worden jullie beperkt door overheden, beleid?
17. Op welke manier worden het bereiken van jullie doelen en jullie praktijken beïnvloedt door **andere partijen** zoals private partijen of andere maatschappelijke organisaties (SRE, KOP Streekhuis, provincie LTO, ZLTO etc.)?
  - a. Samenwerking, op welke gebieden
  - b. Financieringen
  - c. Andersoortige steun

18. Op welke manier worden jullie beperkt door deze partijen?
19. Op welke manier denkt u dat jullie in staat zijn om invloed uit te oefenen op de regio? Bijvoorbeeld op beleid en/of overheden? **MACHT EN INVLOED**
20. Met het oog op de toekomst, welke kansen zien jullie in het veranderende CLLD? LEADER? En spelen jullie hier ook op in?

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**Half time**

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**De andere dimensies (15)**

Op welke manier werken jullie aan jullie doelen (in praktijk, dus wat doen ze op het moment of hebben ze gedaan in het verleden) en met wie werken jullie daarin samen? Er zijn vier domeinen, die ik langs zal gaan, en dan zal ik vragen of uw organisatie zich bezighoudt met deze domeinen.

21. Duurzaamheid: - wat verstaat u onder duurzaamheid? Op welke manier werken jullie hieraan? Alleen op het gebied van ecologie, natuur en landschap, of ook economische en sociale duurzaamheid + definitie hiervan en op welke manier werken ze hieraan?
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
22. Endogeniteit: Maken jullie gebruik van eigen hulpbronnen, bijvoorbeeld fysieke bronnen landschap, rivieren en hebben jullie hier ook controle over? en op het gebied van lokale cultuur, lokaal voedsel, sturen jullie hier ook op?
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
23. Benutten van de markt: Hoe verhouden jullie je tot de reguliere markt, worden er nieuwe markten gecreeerd? (bv lokaal voedsel, toerisme etc.)
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
24. Inspelen op nieuwe ontwikkelingen: Zijn jullie bezig met vernieuwing, bijv dmv het leren van andere regio's, nieuwe kennis opdoen, vernieuwende praktijken, innovatie, uitvindingen
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?

**Beperkingen/mogelijkheden (15)**

25. In het algemeen welke factoren denkt u dat uw organisatie tot een succes maken?
26. Welke factoren beperken het behalen van jullie doelen?

Na het vragen van algemene beperkingen en mogelijkheden zal ik de volgende factoren één bij één langs gaan. Op een lijst zal ik afgedrukt hebben staan welke factoren mogelijk kunnen bijdragen of juist niet bijdragen aan de agency van de organisatie. Respondenten zouden kunnen aangeven of de factoren een positieve (+) zeer positieve (++) neutrale (0), negatieve (-) of zeer negatieve rol (--) spelen in het bereiken van de doelen van de organisatie. Na het invullen van dit lijstje kan ik doorvragen op de factoren afzonderlijk en vragen naar eventueel ontbrekende factoren.

<b>Capaciteiten</b>	<b>Middelen</b>
<b>Ondernemersgeest</b>	<b>Geld</b>
<b>Organisatievermogen</b>	<b>Subsidies</b>

<b>Doorzettingsvermogen</b>	<b>Particuliere investeringen</b>
<b>Netwerkend vermogen</b>	
	<b>Grond</b>
<b>Samenwerking binnen de organisatie</b>	<b>Gebouwen</b>
<b>Samenwerking met andere partijen</b>	
	<b>Mankracht</b>
<b>Collectief leiderschap om gezamenlijk verandering teweeg te brengen</b>	<b>Tijd</b>
<b>Individueel leiderschap dat visies en mensen samenbrengt en innovatief is.</b>	

### **Mentaliteit (10)**

27. Is er sprake van een specifieke mentaliteit in de regio? Wat houdt die in? Op wie heeft die mentaliteit betrekking?

Nu zal ik vragen stellen over de mentaliteit van de regio's en eerst een aantal citaten voorlezen om toe te lichten welke mentaliteit ik bedoel.

Voor de Kempen: saamhorigheid, gastvrijheid, hulpvaardigheid, openheid naar buitenstaanders, belang van het katholieke geloof, gelatenheid en eenvoud in het leven, niet punctueel en niet strak op afspraken en hartelijkheid

Voor het Vechtdal: vasthouden aan het oude, plichtsbef, eerbied voor autoriteit, geloof in God vredelievendheid, besluiteloosheid, trage besluitvorming, neiging om te overleggen, eerlijkheid, zuinigheid, neiging om te imiteren en noaberschap

28. Herkent u deze mentaliteit in de regio?

29. Op welke manier beïnvloedt deze mentaliteit jullie initiatief?

30. Is er sprake van verschillende mentaliteiten? botsingen tussen groepen?

Beleidsmedewerkers? Ondernemers (waaronder agrariers)? Bewoners?

## Appendix 3 Topic list second round of interviews with key stakeholders

Toestemming voor opname, gebruik van citaten, ik geef aan dat ik de resultaten voor zover mogelijke anoniem verwerk en dat ik desgewenst de interview verslagen terrugkoppel aan de respondent

Ik stel mezelf voor en licht de inhoud van mijn onderzoek toe

Ik vraag de respondent zichzelf voor te stellen en wat zijn relatie tot het gebied

### **Achtergrond en visie van de regio (10)**

1. Welke initiatieven en ontwikkelingen spelen er in het Vechtdal, de Kempen op het gebied van natuur en landschapsbeheer en voedsel?
2. Wat is uw visie op de regio?
3. Ziet u ook contrasterende visies? Van welke partijen? Hoe uit zich dat?

### **Achtergrond van het initiatief (5)**

4. Hoe heeft u de initiatieven (nog nader te bepalen welke deze gaan worden) zien ontwikkelen?
5. Hoe brengen ze die doelen om tot concrete projecten?

### **Praktijken (5)**

6. Waar houden ze zich op het moment mee bezig?
7. Wat hebben ze in het verleden bereikt?

### **Sociaal Kapitaal**

#### **Samenwerking (5)**

8. Werken jullie samen met initiatief A?
9. Werken jullie samen met initiatief B?
10. Waar bestaat de samenwerking uit?

#### **Leiderschap (5)**

11. Wie ziet u als leiders in deze initiatieven? Definitie geven van leiderschap  
Leiderschap zie ik als een individu of een groep met mensen die cruciaal zijn in de ontwikkeling van een gebied die in staat zijn om mensen te mobiliseren rond gedeelde ambities , in staat is om allianties te smeden en om vernieuwend bezig te zijn.
12. Op welke manier wordt dit gedaan? En hoe beïnvloedt dit de organisatie?

#### **Instituties (10)**

13. Vanuit uw organisatie, instantie, op welke manier heeft u invloed op de doelen en de praktijken van de initiatieven?
  - a. Samenwerking
  - b. Subsidies/private financieringen
  - c. Andersoortige steun
  - d. Beleid en regelgeving
14. Heeft u ook het idee dat uw rol beperkend kan zijn voor initiatieven? Op welke manier?
15. Op welke manier worden jullie beïnvloedt door deze initiatieven?
16. Welke andere instanties, organisaties hebben invloed op het succes van de initiatieven? Op welke manier? (Streekhuis, SRE, KOP, Provincie, waterschappen, LTO, ZLTO)
  - a. Samenwerking
  - b. Subsidies/private financieringen

- c. Andersoortige steun
- d. Beleid en regelgeving

17. Werken deze partijen ook als belemmering voor de initiatieven?

18. Op welke manier denkt u dat de initiatieven in staat zijn om invloed uit te oefenen op de regio? Bijvoorbeeld op beleid en/of overheden?

**Half time**

**De andere dimensies (15)**

Over de regio gezien op welke manieren werken samenwerkingsverbanden en initiatieven aan de volgende vier domeinen:

19. Duurzaamheid: - wat verstaat u onder duurzaamheid? Op welke manier werken de initiatieven hieraan? Alleen op het gebied van ecologie, natuur en landschap, of ook economische en sociale duurzaamheid + definitie hiervan en op welke manier werken ze hieraan?
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
20. Endogeniteit: Maken ze gebruik van eigen hulpbronnen, bijvoorbeeld fysieke bronnen landschap, rivieren en hebben jullie hier ook controle over? en op het gebied van lokale cultuur, lokaal voedsel, sturen jullie hier ook op?
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
21. Benutten van de markt: Hoe verhouden de initiatieven zich tot de reguliere markt, worden er nieuwe markten gecreëerd? (bv lokaal voedsel, toerisme etc.)
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?
22. Inspelen op nieuwe ontwikkelingen: Zijn de initiatieven bezig met vernieuwing, bijv dmv het leren van andere regio's, nieuwe kennis opdoen, vernieuwende praktijken, innovatie, uitvindingen
- a. Gebeurt dit vanuit samenwerking met overheid, private of maatschappelijke organisaties, met welke en hoe?

**Beperkingen/mogelijkheden (10)**

23. In het algemeen welke factoren denkt u dat de initiatieven tot een succes maakt?
24. Welke factoren beperken de initiatieven?

Na het vragen van algemene beperkingen en mogelijkheden zal ik de volgende factoren één bij één langs gaan. Op een lijst zal ik afgedrukt hebben staan welke factoren mogelijk kunnen bijdragen of juist niet bijdragen aan de agency van de organisatie. Respondenten zouden kunnen aangeven of de factoren een positieve (+) zeer positieve (++) neutrale (0), negatieve (-) of zeer negatieve rol (--) spelen in het bereiken van de doelen van de organisatie. Na het invullen van dit lijstje kan ik doorvragen op de factoren afzonderlijk en vragen of er nog factoren missen.

Capaciteiten	Middelen
Ondernemersgeest	Geld
Organisatievermogen	Subsidies

<b>Doorzettingsvermogen</b>	<b>Particuliere investeringen</b>
<b>Netwerkend vermogen</b>	
	<b>Grond</b>
<b>Samenwerking binnen de organisatie</b>	<b>Gebouwen</b>
<b>Samenwerking met andere partijen</b>	
	<b>Mankracht</b>
<b>Collectief leiderschap om gezamenlijk verandering teweeg te brengen</b>	<b>Tijd</b>
<b>Individueel leiderschap dat visies en mensen samenbrengt en innovatief is.</b>	

### **Mentaliteit (10)**

25. Is er sprake van een specifieke mentaliteit in de regio? Wat houdt die in? Op wie heeft die mentaliteit betrekking?

Voor de Kempen: saamhorigheid, gastvrijheid, hulpvaardigheid, openheid naar buitenstaanders, belang van het katholieke geloof, gelatenheid en eenvoud in het leven, niet punctueel en strak op afspraken en hartelijkheid

Voor het Vechtdal: vasthouden aan het oude, plichtsbesef, eerbied voor autoriteit, geloof in God vredelievendheid, besluiteloosheid, trage besluitvorming, neiging om te overleggen, eerlijkheid, zuinigheid, neiging om te imiteren en noaberschap

26. Herkent u deze mentaliteit in de regio?

27. Op welke manier beïnvloedt deze mentaliteit de initiatieven?

28. Is er sprake van verschillende mentaliteiten? botsingen tussen groepen?

Beleidsmedewerkers? Ondernemers, waaronder agrariërs? Bewoners?