



THE RISE OF AGRICULTURAL REGIONAL COOPERATIVES

BSc. Thesis-upgrade

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The rise of agricultural regional cooperatives

BSc. Thesis-upgrade report

April-June, 2017

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Executive summary

In recent years more and more regional cooperatives, local cooperative nature conservation initiatives, cooperative agricultural collectives, and other types of collective action organizations related to the agricultural sector are established. Within this paper these organizations are defined as agricultural regional cooperatives (ARC's):

- Agricultural regional cooperatives are innovative groups of local and regional parties and entrepreneurs collaborating to improve the region. Activities often aim to increase sustainability of the region, improving the nature and landscape of the region and to improve farming techniques.

This study sheds some light on the urge for the establishment of ARC's (69% of Dutch ARC's are established in 2014 and 2015), the activities carried out by ARC's, the history of ARC's in the Netherlands, and the development and trends of ARC's.

The history of ARC's is explained by looking at the history of both Agricultural Nature Associations (in Dutch ANV's) and nature conservation policy. ARC's are often the result of mergers between ANV's and other groups of farmers. The need for involvement in policy making and the implementing of new agricultural policies are motivators for the establishment of ARC's. Also the need to reduce the disconnection of society and nature is an emerging point of attention.

This paper shows a map with the locations of all ARC's in the Netherlands, also a database showing all ARC's and a number of specifics was designed in Excel. The differences in size and the regional specifics of ARC's were examined. Regional differences, such as presence of pasture birds and urban pressure, appeared to be determinants for the size of ARC's.

The most important activities of ARC's are: executing the ANLb (agri-environmental landscape management), being the central point of contact for regional issues and topics, build bridges between regional parties, and develop and share knowledge.

The developments and trends related to Dutch ARC's were discussed during the interviews. The most important developments are indicated in this paper. Summarized these are:

- Many new ARC's established and starting up
- Additional activities/ Increasing differentiation
- Increasing collaboration with both ARC's and other parties
- Increasing local involvement
- Increasing environmental responsibility

Interviewees acknowledged that many of the ARC's in the Netherlands are still scanning for the best ways of controlling the organization. Many ARC's search for additional activities to become increasingly independent. Because of the broadening activities of ARC's in the Netherlands the differences between ARC's is increasing. While ARC's become more experienced they will increasingly look at how other parties perform and what they could contribute to each other. Next to increasing their scope of activities and initiating new partnerships their local involvement is growing. Many ARC's increasingly collaborate with municipalities, provinces and other parties such as Staatsbosbeheer (national forestry management) and therefore the involvement of ARC's is growing. And because of additional nature and landscape activities their environmental responsibility is growing as well.

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents the project context, the problem definition & research objective, the research questions and the research method.

1.1. Project context

In recent years more and more regional cooperatives, local cooperative nature conservation initiatives, cooperative agricultural collectives, and other types of collective action organizations related to the agricultural sector are established. However unclear is where these cooperatives come from, what the differences are, and why so many of them have been founded. Literature describes the emergence of regional and environmental cooperatives in the early 1990s (Glasbergen, 2000; Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001), however it is unknown whether agricultural regional cooperatives founded more recently are replacements or restitutes of these environmental cooperatives. Possibly ARC's (agricultural regional cooperatives) are new types of agricultural nature associations which try to build a more intensive network with other local parties. This paper will look into literature on the origin and motives of ARC's in the agricultural sector in the Netherlands. Defined is what ARC's are and how collective action organizations can be categorized. Developments regarding these ARC's will be investigated and differences between the ARC's of now and then will be explored.

1.2. Problem definition & Research objective

This paper explores many aspects of ARC's. Many regional collective action organizations have been founded in the Netherlands during the last 20-25 years, and especially in the years 2014 and 2015 regional cooperatives became very popular. This paper will shed some light on the motives behind the rise of ARC's and what the purpose of these organizations are. This paper further enlightens the core activities of ARC's and explores the history of ARC's in the Netherlands.

The objective of this paper is:

- Exploring the rise and development of ARC's in the agricultural sector in the Netherlands.

This research investigates regional cooperatives in the Dutch agricultural sector and explores the motivation, activities and history of these collective action organizations. Aspects on which is focused are:

- History
- Number and location of ARC's in the Netherlands
- Founders of ARC's
- Motives for establishment
- Recent and future developments
- Core activities and focus

1.3. Research questions

The general research question of this paper is:

GRQ: How have ARC's developed over time and how can the rise of ARC's in the Netherlands be explained?

Specific research questions are formulated to answer the GRQ. The SRQ's of this research are:

SRQ 1: What are ARC's?

SRQ 2: What is the history of ARC's in the Netherlands?

SRQ 3: How many ARC's are currently actively involved in the agricultural sector and in which regions do these ARC's operate?

SRQ 4: What are the core activities of ARC's nowadays?

SRQ 5: What are current and future trends in the development of ARC's?

1.4. Research framework

This section shows the research framework. This framework is designed to provide a clear overview of the purpose of this paper.



Figure 1: Research framework

The framework is used to organize the different aspects of this research. At the end of the literature study this framework is used to provide a clear overview of the knowledge and information found during the study.

2. Methods

This chapter explains the methods used to answer the research questions.

2.1. Research strategy

This paper presents an explorative research on ARC's. A number of aspects of ARC's, such as their core activities, locations, and founders, are explored and described in detail.

Before choosing a research strategy looked is at the key decisions which need to be made according to Doorewaard and Verschuren (2010). These decisions focus on the following aspects of the research:

- Research scope: Breadth (overview) or depth (thorough investigation)
- Qualitative or quantitative
- Empirical or desk research

This paper goes into detail on the core activities of ARC's (in-depth investigation), however, also a database is constructed to provide an overview of Dutch ARC's (breadth investigation). This paper combines a bit of both for the first key decision and actually for all three key decisions. Since the ultimate goal of this research is to explore the rise of ARC's and to describe current developments and trends for ARC's, the in-depth qualitative approach is most important. This paper will nevertheless use both qualitative and quantitative research methods while both scientific and empirical information is used to answer the research questions.

To use the right approach for gaining the necessary data and information this research uses a combination of strategies. Case study strategy and desk research will be combined to find answers to the research questions (Doorewaard & Verschuren, 2010). At first a desk research will be executed. Information is brought together to conclude on the ARC's in the Netherlands. After describing the findings of the desk research this paper will go into more detail on some of the aspects of ARC's using interviews with experts in the field of agricultural regional organizations.

Which sources, research materials and methods are used is described per research phase. The research phases are:

- Literature review
- Interviews

2.2. Literature review

Literature has been reviewed to provide (background)information on ARC's and to provide preliminary answers to the research questions. The literature study focuses on the following aspects:

- Definition of ARC's
- History of ARC's in the Netherlands
- Number and location of ARC's in the Netherlands
- Activities of ARC's
- Recent and future developments

Scientific databases are used to find publications on ARC's. Using several search terms such as: environmental cooperative; milieu coöperatie; Gebiedscoöperatie; Agri-environmental schemes and agricultural/landscape/nature cooperatives, information is found on Dutch ARC's.

The findings from the literature are, especially when searching for recent and current information, not sufficient to answer the research questions. Therefore also non-scientific information and data is gathered to complement the findings from scientific literature. The empirical search is mainly focused on constructing an overview of the ARC's in the Netherlands and to gather missing information regarding these ARC's to complete the database of all Dutch ARC's. The database includes a number of specifications being: year of establishment, website, founding fathers, certifications, location, main goal/purpose and legal name. A part of the database is shown in Appendix 1 and 2. To find all ARC's multiple data sources are used, these are:

- The NCR (Nationale Coöperatieve Raad)
- Kamer van Koophandel (chamber of commerce) database
- BoerenNatuur.nl/SCAN listed collectives
- Using Google/searching private websites and publications

Every legal organization in the Netherlands is registered at the "Kamer van Koophandel". The website of the KvK is designed in such a manner that every Dutch organization can be found. Using search terms such as "Gebiedscoöperatie" and "Coöperatieve Agrarische Natuurvereniging" all regional cooperatives have been found and their legal entity, as registered at the KvK, is included in the database designed for this paper. A project of Merel Hoveling (2016), at that time working for the NCR, a database of (regional) cooperatives is compiled together with the KvK. The NCR is approached for this database and Cynthia Griffioen has sent a list of regional cooperatives and similar organisations in the Netherlands, shown in Appendix 3.

BoerenNatuur.nl and SCAN are umbrella organizations for ARC's/collectives which facilitate the subsidy requests of farmers in specific regions (for further elaboration on these organizations see section 3.5., page 20, of this paper).

The different sources are searched to find all ARC's in the Netherlands. To prevent search errors multiple sources are used and multiple names of similar organizations are included. If an organization fits the definition of a agricultural regional cooperative, as stated later in this paper, it is included in the database. Regional cooperatives or other organizations which do not fit the definition are not included in the database and therefore are not present in the overview of ARC's in the Netherlands.

On every regional cooperative, or similar organization, to be included in the database a background check is executed. This background check primarily focuses on whether the organization is active, whether the organization fits the definition of this research (does the organization have farmer-members and is agriculture on the agenda), and whether the organization is member of a listed collective (to prevent doubles in the database).

2.3. Interviews

Many ARC's are founded within the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. The activities they carry out are highly diverse. Many organizations are still searching for the best ways to deal with their

different activities and members. Because of the many recent developments and trends regarding ARC's, it is not possible to get all the necessary information via literature and internet sources. Therefore interviews were held. These interviews merely focus on the activities of ARC's and the ongoing and future developments. Three persons will be strategically chosen for interview participation. One of these persons is involved in the governance of an ARC included as a regional collective for subsidy handling, one is involved in the governance of an ARC not-included as a regional collective for subsidy handling, and one interviewee is involved in umbrella organizations supporting ARC's. Selecting interviewees is done through thorough background research.

Contact with the interviewees is made by phone call and an e-mail with additional information is send to the participant. The interviews are conducted at a location of preference of the interviewee. If after three contact attempts there is no answer a new potential participant is contacted.

A semi-structured interview is used to provide answers to the research questions, the interview format is shown in Appendix 4. Within the semi-structured interviews open and closed questions are combined. Open questions are used to receive the opinions of interviewees and to collect their insights and knowledge. The closed questions are used to test the literature and preliminary desk-research outcomes. For instance by providing a scale where interviewees can rate the importance of certain activities of ARC's, an estimation can be made on the most important activities of ARC's.

3. Findings

This chapter describes relevant literature and desk research outcomes to answer the SRQ's of this paper. Structure of this chapter follows the SRQ's and their sequence.

3.1. Defining agricultural regional cooperatives

Within this section SRQ 1: "What are ARC's?" is answered.

This paper focuses on agricultural regional cooperatives only, (information on) regional cooperatives with no agricultural goals, activities or members are excluded from this paper. Whereas many regional cooperatives have agricultural and/or landscape related backgrounds there are exceptions, e.g. a regional cooperative for increasing the appearance of a railway station (Hoveling, 2016).

ARC's, in this paper, are defined following the definition of Renting and van der Ploeg (2001), their definition states the following:

- *"Environmental cooperatives are innovative associations of farmers based at local or regional level, which promote and organize activities related to sustainable agriculture and rural development in their locale. They also claim to be actively involved in the formulation and realization of adequate rural policies within their operational boundaries."*

The 59 organizations found are examined on whether they fit this definition.

Environmental cooperatives, regional cooperatives, farmers associations are all names used for similar organizations. However, although being similar, the activities of ARC's variate a lot, which makes finding one suitable definition hard. Within this paper we speak of agricultural regional cooperative whereas, especially in the older literature, the term environmental cooperative, or in Dutch "Milieucoöperatie", is often preferred. Since a number of years the name regional cooperative, or in Dutch "Gebiedscoöperatie", became increasingly used. And similar to the term environmental cooperative, it can be rather confusing. The use of the name environmental cooperative is first introduced by G. van Dijk in 1990, who was at that time Director of the National Council of Cooperatives, and since the introduction it has become a common name (van Dijk G. , 1990; van Dijk G. , 1994). The name is most used referring to farmers' associations, which, according to van Dijk (1994), could become an effective means to address local and political challenges regarding agriculture. Interesting note is that many farmers' associations were referred to as environmental cooperatives while, legally, they were registered as associations (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001).

Whether they are called environmental or (agricultural) regional cooperatives, in most cases, the emphasis of their activities lies on nature and landscape management and development. These cooperatives are innovative groups of farmers, and occasionally other stakeholders, which want to be actively involved in the rural development of the region where they are based. The ARC's want to influence rural policymaking whereas they often represent the landowners and are nature conservationists themselves. ARC's are known to support the transition to a more sustainable agriculture by funding projects and promoting sustainable activities (van Dijk, Lokhorst, Berendse, & de Snoo, 2015).

Mainly ARC's use either of the two legal entities: cooperative or association. These legal entities are combined with additional organizational names and terms. In the case of ARC's, and organizations with similar purposes and organizational structures, many organizational names can be applicable. A stocktaking of all registered regional cooperative alike organizations resulted in a list of 59 organizations. All found organizations use one, or a combination, of the following Dutch organizational names:

- Coöperatie (cooperative)
- Collectief (collective)
- Vereniging (association)

These organizational names are often combined with additional terms such as agricultural, nature, or landscape, to indicate the purpose of the organization. Most organizations include a name of a region to indicate their origin and area of operations. The complete list of Dutch regional organizations is shown in Appendix 1.

The organizations need to be, at least partially, founded to support farmers in finding and applying more environmental-friendly practices and they need to be actively involved in the sustainable development of the region. A number of organizations did not meet these requirements and are therefore not included in the database and overview of ARC's in this paper (reasons of excluding are presented in Appendix 2). Of the 59 organizations found, 45 fit the definition of this paper. Of these 45 organizations, 40 are member of BoerenNatuur.nl. BoerenNatuur.nl is an umbrella organization supporting 40 agricultural collectives with handling agri-environmental subsidies on behalf of their farmer members.

Five non-member organizations included in the database of this paper are organizations which do not arrange the agri-environmental subsidy requests for farmers, however they are involved in the environmental support activities. These regional organizations are not obligated to have the certificate for handling subsidy requests and are therefore not member of the broader association BoerenNatuur.nl. These ARC's work with farmers on (local) environmental issues and sustainable projects. The ARC's have highly varying activities and purposes. While, for instance, the goal of one ARC is to deal with agri-environmental subsidies another ARC can have multiple segments, for instance including sustainable energy and tourism. A complete overview of organizations fitting the definition as stated will be provided in section 3.3. ARC's in the Netherlands.

Summary

The first section of this chapter presents the definition of a ARC used in this paper. The definition used is the definition of an environmental cooperative formulated by Renting and van der Ploeg (2001). The definition of a agricultural regional cooperative will be further examined in the interviews. Assumed in this paper is that the name ARC is a successor of the name EC, in other words ARC's are the new EC's. Interviews will go into detail on the similarities and differences between organizational names encountered in this paper. Assumed is that, while varying much, the following organizations can be very similar despite their different organizational names: ANV (agricultural nature organization), Environmental cooperative, and Agricultural collective.

ARC's included in the database (45) of this paper and excluded from the database (14) are examined on a number of characteristics on which further elaboration is presented in Appendix 1 and 2 and section 3.3. of this chapter.

3.2. History of ARC's in the Netherlands

In this section “SRQ 2: What is the history of ARC's in the Netherlands?” is answered.

History of nature conservation policy

The history of ARC's in the Netherlands is highly related to the nature conservation policies. Therefore, prior to the history of ARC's, the history of nature conservation policies is briefly explained.

The implementation of the first nature conservation policy found place in 1975 (Runhaar, et al., 2016). Goal of the policy was to increase the number of landowners actively using voluntary measures for nature conservation. The policy focused on two approaches: 1. 100.000 hectares of agricultural land were to be taken out of production and given back to nature and 2. 100.000 hectares of agricultural land is to be maintained by farmers using the nature conservation measures. The emphasis of the 1975 nature policy was on meadow birds and their conservation (e.g. postponement of the mowing date, no use of pesticides), participation remained completely voluntary. An Agri-Environmental Scheme (AES) was put into place to compensate landowners investing in nature conservation measures.

The two approaches of the nature conservation policy can be seen as distinct policies needing distinct measures. The two approaches can still be recognized nowadays. The policy was implemented by the state, however, due to a lack of success, the responsibility was transferred to provinces in 2013 (Runhaar, et al., 2016). The nature conservation policy has been revised continuously since 1975. Organizations such as LTO, agricultural nature associations, and ARC's have lobbied intensively to represent the farmer members and to influence the policy development.

Not many farmers were inclined to participate in the nature conservation policy of 1975 since they had to sell their land or take additional measures reducing productivity. Therefore the policy was continuously changed to increase participation and to motivate and mobilize farmers. This resulted in a growth of participation which reached his largest amount around 2000, at which point approximately 64.000 hectares was included in nature conservation measures. In 2013 this number was decreased to about 59.000 hectares (Runhaar, et al., 2016). Between 2000 and 2014 4% of agricultural land in the Netherlands, being 94.000 hectares, was taken out of production. These hectares are used for (semi-)urban development (51%); forestry and nature (22%); recreation, water and infrastructure (resp. 10, 8, and 9%) (CBS, 2014).

Despite the improvements in participation the policy was still considered to have a lack of success. Therefore the policy changed radically in 1990, 2000 and 2016. In 1990 a new nature conservation policy was implemented, also stimulating farmers to join agricultural nature associations and environmental cooperatives (Arnouts, 2010). The policy introduced the concept of the EHS (ecological main infrastructure). The old policy focused on integrating measures for nature conservation on agricultural land used for production while the new policy mainly focused on the spatial separation of nature and agricultural land (Jurgens, 1993). However, the policy of 1990 experienced very similar problems as the nature conservation policy of 1975. Although the government increased subsidies and funding many landowners remained reluctant to sell their agricultural land for EHS and to participate in AES. It was for these problems that the policy was once again adapted and re-implemented in 2000. From 2000 onwards the government would recognize landowners as nature managers instead of

appointing all agricultural land in transition to nature reserve management organizations (Arnouts, 2010). The EHS is still the main emphasis of the Dutch nature conservation policy. From 2000 onwards EC's were offered the opportunity to apply for two AES: the protection of meadow birds and environmental maintenance (e.g. ditch banks). The program of 2000 was called "Programma Beheer" and the AES executed by multiple farmers while coordinated by EC's, often covered more than 100 hectares (Oerlemans, Guldemond, & Visser, 2007). Also before individual farmers where denied the right to request their environmental subsidies, which happened in 2016, environmental cooperatives played a role in the AES covered areas. Almost 40% of the area involved in AES was covered by collectives while its expenses covered 34% of the total Dutch expenditure on AES (Oerlemans, Hees, & Guldemond, 2006), strengthening the position of collectives and promoting the collective approach.

In 2016 the nature conservation policy implemented a different approach. Previous to the new policy of 2016 farmers were able to request a subsidy of the state in case of participation in AES. The new policy prevents this, farmers are now obligated to request subsidies trough a certified collective organization (Runhaar, et al., 2016).

Governance arrangements

Runhaar et al (2016) identified and summarized 4 arrangement regarding the Dutch nature conservation policy present in the agricultural sector in 2016. These 4 are (Runhaar, et al., 2016):

1. Prescribed habitat measures (income support payments of EU Common Agricultural Policy)(e.g. maintenance of ditches and protection of woody landscape elements)
2. Nature reserve areas (land bought by government)
3. AES system (revised since 2015 with a focus on agricultural collectives) (e.g. meadow bird protection)
4. Fauna fund (compensation for damage caused by protected and/or special species)

These four arrangements are the pillars of nowadays nature conservation policies. The responsibility is increasingly transferred to the locale.

Biodiversity

The worldwide declining of biodiversity, for instance due to decreasing preserved nature (Sarukhán and Whyte, 2005), is a major point of attention nowadays. Projects related to biodiversity are increasingly started by organizations such as ARC's. The failed attempt to put a stop to the declining biodiversity by 2010 has resulted in a new approach of the EU. The goal of the new approach is to stop the declining of biodiversity by 2020 (Maes, Paracchini, Zulian, Dunbar, & Alkemade, 2012). The modernization and intensification of agriculture is seen as one of the main causes of the declining of biodiversity (Stoate, et al., 2009). In Europe, about 45% of all rural area is covered by agricultural land and many endangered species, at least partially, rely on agricultural land (Kleijn, Rundlöf, Scheper, Smith, & Tscharntke, 2011). Biodiversity is therefore integrated in the nature conservation policies (and AES) of nowadays (e.g. grants for postponement of the mowing date, flower edges).

The history of ARC's

Ever since the 1900s many farmers in the Netherlands are member of an ANV (agricultural nature association). ANV's are groups of farmers which promote more environmental-friendly

practices for farming and support initiatives increasing sustainability and biodiversity. Many ARC's and collectives are the result of mergers of ANV's.

The first official environmental cooperative in the Netherlands was founded in 1991 as a reaction to the modernization of agriculture (Oerlemans, Hees, & Guldemond, 2006; van Dijk, Lokhorst, Berendse, & de Snoo, 2015) and the new nature conservation policy (Arnouts, 2010; Runhaar, et al., 2016). The modernization of agriculture had resulted in the break-down of interlinkages between farming, ecology and society (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001). Where farmers used to be regarded as close to nature this reputation was destroyed in the early 1900s. With highly intensive farming practices which increasingly use artificial products or industrialized artefacts instead of the natural resources, the reputation of farmers shifted towards a polluting one (Glasbergen, 2000). Historically, farmers adapted their way of farming to their ecological surroundings which resulted in differentiated regional farming systems all over the Netherlands (Van der Ploeg, 1994). Differences between areas were based on for instance specific regional products, breeds of animals, crops, building types, landscapes, farming techniques, and particular ecological values (Meeus, Wijermans, & Vroom, 1990). However, due to the economic success of Dutch agriculture and herewith the increasing productivity and efficiency, this landscape of differentiated regions began to fade away. More similarities and a larger scale resulted into threats for local farmers, ecology and society. While the scale of farming increased the number of farmers began to decline, for instance in 1955 the Netherlands had over 319,000 farms using 2.3 million hectares of arable land, while in 1995, 113,000 farms were left using 1.9 million hectares of arable land (Glasbergen, 2000).

A new movement against the trend of agricultural modernization emerged, starting with the first environmental cooperative in 1992 (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001). Environmental cooperatives are collectives of farmers and farmer associations who want to promote activities enhancing sustainable development of the rural area. These cooperatives claim to be actively involved in the local policymaking (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001). The focus of these cooperatives is on re-embedding farming and farmers in their local environment. The foundation of the first environmental cooperatives led to a chain-reaction since soon the number of cooperatives grew over a hundred.

The presence of social mechanisms in agriculture, exemplified by for instance common land uses and community-based forms of labour exchange, were decreasing. Wider social and institutional relations with farmers increasingly became victim of distrust, conflicts, and disconnection. The perspectives on farming and society were never this differentiated. While society increasingly struggled with food scares, health risks, and the increasing importance of consumption interests, farmers felt less and less appreciated and trusted (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001). This also affected relations with government and institutions. As the political environment around farming became differentiated the government, and policy-making, stood in-between farmers and society at large. While, ever since the second World War, the emphasis of farming was on producing food for all, the negative consequences of this strategy started to change the opinion of many. In a situation where two or three parties do not trust each other interrelations become penetrated with conflicts and disconnections. This will strengthen the mutual distrust even further.

These developments in agriculture, and specifically the dairy sector, resulted in legal limitations designed by governments such as quotas, spatial planning restrictions and more. Many restrictions limited the further unfolding of the modernization of agriculture and specifically one aspect of this being expansion. Farm growth became harder to realize and the

costs of control and surveillance raised (Frouws, et al., 1996). Despite the legal restrictions also social restriction began to appear more often. Not only did a farmer need to cope with environmental regulations and his own strategy and management boundaries, also neighbours started to limit dairy farmers in for instance their use of pesticides. Neighbours could interfere with permit requests raising questions on the influences on the environment. The dividedness of rural society and the increasing importance of nature and landscape interests were extra motivators for ARC's.

While smaller traditional farms were often described as temporary phenomena and expected was their gradual disappearance, their potential started growing. New rural development activities and strategies such as producing high quality local foods (De Roest, 2000), organic farming (Miele, 2001), agro-tourism, and agro-environmental measures (Broekhuizen, Klep, Oostindie, & van der Ploeg, 1997) formed the basis for new alternative ways of food production.

In order to facilitate the implementation of environmental policies and to ensure involvement in political issues, environmental cooperatives tried to build a solid relationships with policymakers. Occasionally environmental cooperatives were assigned to help implement new regulations while government would grant the cooperatives freedom of method as long as targets where being realized (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001). The environmental cooperative was allowed to use own tools and local approaches to realize the targets set by the government for a certain number of years. If the cooperative did not succeed, the contract was terminated and farmers needed to comply with the generic regulations, if the targets were reached the contract was most often renewed.

Environmental cooperative were a reaction to the modernization of agriculture. Production-focused agriculture was possible due to a favourable institutional environment (van der Ploeg & Frouws, 1999). The institutional environment needed to become increasingly favourable for sustainable agriculture, whereas new policies, incentives and regulations are needed to solidly build on sustainable farming (Roep, 2000). Environmental cooperatives experiment with new approaches and invest in lobbying activities to have a say in the institutional decision-making and to represent farmers. Goal is to become a participating intermediate between farmers and state which is actively involved in policymaking.

The history of ARC's is briefly explained in the figure in Appendix 5 which includes the following on history of ARC's: "Agricultural regional cooperatives are often the result of mergers between ANV's and other groups of farmers. They primarily focus on sustainable agricultural and environmental development. Nature conservation policy and societal attention for sustainability of agriculture has been very determinative for the rise of ARC's."

3.3. ARC's in the Netherlands

Within this section SRQ 3: "How many ARC's are currently actively involved in the agricultural sector and in which regions do these ARC's operate?" is answered.

A agricultural regional cooperative is described as an innovative association of farmers based at local or regional level promoting sustainable and environmental-friendly development of the rural area. Following this definition all organizations included in this research need to, at least partially, consist of farmer members. Recognized during the stocktaking of ARC's is that a number of them have multiple focus groups and segments. If these ARC's, or similar organizations, have an active participating group of farmer members, they are included in the

overview. From the 59 organizations with matching organizational names, 45 fit the definition of this research. The complete list of the 45 ARC's is shown in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 shows a lists of the non-included organizations, which are registered using similar names, and the reasons for not including them. Main reasons not to include these RC's are: no agricultural entrepreneurs are involved, they are not active, and their purpose does not match the definition of this paper. Figure 2 shows where the 45 ARC's are localized.



Figure 2: ARC's in the Netherlands

Names of organizations

Described in the first section of this chapter is the use of different names of Dutch regional organizations. Appendix 1 and 2 show the legal names of all regional agricultural organizations included and, after examination, excluded regional organizations. The legal name "Gebiedscoöperatie" (translated regional cooperative) is used 14 times, excluding "Coöperatief gebiedscollectief" (cooperative regional collective). In total 7 of these 14 RC's are excluded in this paper due to a lack of agricultural members, a lack of activity, or a lack of available information. From the 7 included ARC's 4 do not have a certificate or handling agri-environment grants, leaving 3 ARC's which do handle the grant requests of farmers.

Recognized during the investigations on ARC's is that they have highly variable purposes and activities. Regional cooperative is a legal organization form used by many collective action groups and has no agricultural limitation. A regional cooperative can be founded for a multitude of reasons and motives. However, that being said, most RC's are established for sustainable development of the environment and agriculture, only 5 of the 59 regional organizations had different origins.

Agricultural regional cooperative, in this paper, refers to the 45 agricultural regional organizations in the Netherlands. Table 1 shows a list of the 45 ARC's and their location.

Table 1: ARC's in the Netherlands

	Name	Location
	Groningen	
1	Collectief Groningen West	Leek
2	Agrarisch Natuur- en Landschapscollectief Midden-Groningen	Scharmer
3	Agrarische Natuurvereniging Oost Groningen	Wedde
4	Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier BA	Noordhorn
	Drenthe	
5	Coöperatie Het Drents Collectief U.A.	Rolde
6	Gebiedscoöperatie Zuidwest Drenthe UA	Ruinerwold
	Friesland	
7	Agrarische Natuurvereniging "Waddenvogels"	Hollum
8	Coöperatieve vereniging Coöperatie Agrarisch Collectief Waadrâne UA	Brantgum
9	Coöperatieve vereniging Westergo UA	Oudega
10	Coöperatieve Vereniging Südwestkust UA	Wons
11	Gebiedscoöperatie It Lege Midden U.A.	Aldeboarn
12	ELAN Agrarische Natuurverenigingen Zuidoost Friesland	Beetsterzwaag
13	Noardlike Fryske Wâlden	Damwald/Burgum
	Flevoland	
14	Coöperatie Flevolands Agrarisch Collectief U.A.	Zeewolde
	Overijssel	
15	Coöperatieve Agrarische Natuur Collectief Noordwest Overijssel UA	Kampen
16	Coöperatieve Agrarisch Natuur Collectief Midden Overijssel UA	Ambt Delden
17	Coöperatie Gebiedscollectief Noordoost-Twente U.A.	Deurningen

18	Gebiedscoöperatie IJsseldelta UA	Hasselt
	Gelderland	
19	Coöperatieve Vereniging Agrarisch Landschap Achterhoek U.A.	Vorden
20	Coöperatie Agrarische Natuurbeheervereniging Collectief Rivierenland U.A.	Echteld
21	Coöperatief Agrarisch Natuur Collectief Veluwe U.A.	Nijkerk
22	Gebiedscoöperatie Oregional U.A.	Aerdt
23	Coöperative Vereniging Particulier Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Winterswijk en omstreken UA	Winterswijk Meddo
	Noord Holland	
24	Gebiedscoöperatie Noord-Holland Zuid U.A.	Amstelveen
25	Vereniging Agrarisch natuur- en landschapsbeheer Water, Land en Dijken	Purmerend
26	Vereniging Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Hollands Noorden	Obdam
27	Agrarische Natuur- en Landschapsvereniging De Lieuw Texel	Oudeschild
	Utrecht	
28	Coöperatie Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Utrecht Oost U.A.	Leusden
29	Collectief Eemland	Bunschoten-Spakenburg
30	Gebiedscoöperatie Rijn Vecht en Venen U.A.	Loenen aan de Vecht
31	Agrarische natuur & landschapsvereniging "De Lopikerwaard e.o."	Ijsselstein
	Zuid Holland	
32	Vereniging Agrarisch Natuur- en Landschapsbeheer Rijn & Gouwe Wiericke	Bodegraven
33	Agrarische Natuurvereniging "De Hollandse Venen"	Zevenhoven
34	Coöperatie De Groene Klaver U.A.	Voorschoten
35	Coöperatief Agrarisch Collectief Krimpenerwaard U.A.	Bergambacht
36	Collectief Alblasserwaard/Vijfheerenlanden Coöperatieve U.A.	Goudriaan
37	Coöperatie Collectief Hoeksche Waard UA	Strijen
38	Coöperatief Agrarisch Collectief Zuidhollandse Eilanden U.A.	Sommelsdijk
39	Coöperatie Agrarisch collectief Midden-Delfland U.A	Schiphol
	Noord Brabant	
40	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer West-Brabant u.a.	Sprundel
41	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Midden-Brabant U.A.	Vlijmen
42	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Oost-Brabant UA	Sambeek
	Zeeland	
43	Coöperatie Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer U.A. (Poldernatuur Zeeland)	Colijnsplaat
	Limburg	
44	Coöperatie Natuurrijk Limburg u.a.	Roermond
	Nederland	
45	Coöperatieve Vereniging Collectief Deltaplan Landschap U.A.	Driebergen-Rijsenburg

SCAN

A total of 40 ARC's listed in Table 1 are certified agri-environmental subsidy handlers and were member of SCAN, the association helping ARC's start-up¹. Participants of AES are obligated to arrange their subsidy request via these certified agricultural collectives. Figure 3 shows the working areas of the 40 ARC's, plus the non-agricultural Kroondomein het Loo (number 40). Number 34 Vockestaert, still on this map, has merged with Midden-Delfland U.A. in 2015.



Stand van zaken d.d. 1-10-2015

Figure 3: Agricultural collectives member of SCAN

¹ SCAN facilitated ARC's in their start-up phase however SCAN itself is terminated in 2016. All tasks related to subsidy handling are transferred to Boerennatuur.

The size of the SCAN members is varying. Possibly this is due to very specific regional characteristics, the willingness to collaborate, the number and intensity of agricultural entrepreneurs, the involvement of other parties (such as LTO), the history of ANV's, and additional services and products delivered by the agricultural collectives. There is no literature found on these differences in size and why certain groups choose for the small or the bigger organizations. The size of ARC's will therefore be an item in the interviews.

3.4. Activities of ARC's

Within this section SRQ 4: "What are the core activities of ARC's nowadays?" is answered.

ANV's are found to be the precursors of ARC's. The reasons for foundation, goals, and activities of ANV's are similar to those of ARC's.

Reasons for the foundation of ANV's and ARC's are described by Oerlemans, Hees, and Guldemond (2006), Renting and van der Ploeg (2001), Glasbergen (2000), and van Dijk et al (2015). The activities of ARC's and ANV's are highly varying. Many cooperatives are focused on their locale and address challenges only relevant to their local members. However, there are general similarities. Lobbying is one of the activities of ARC's. Lobbying is done to provide counterweight to external threats. Examples of threats are policies that can lead to a reduction of agricultural development opportunities such as policies regarding manure and AES. The desire for more self-regulation is often a motive for starting and joining a ARC. Farmers want a greater share in the area-specific decisions in the field of nature management and environment. Another important benefit and motivator is improving collaboration and consultation in the region. Collaboration with other parties in the area (e.g. citizens, nature conservationists, governments) can be of high importance to local entrepreneurs and in this case farmers. ARC's often use a offensive instead of defensive approach, collaboration in a region facilitates such an approach. (Area specific) problems are actively approached in consultation with the other parties.

ARC's contribute to knowledge development. Aside of the knowledge developing projects and researches ARC's also inspect subsidy possibilities, for instance offered for (agricultural) nature management, by governments and other allowances.

Not every ARC is founded by the efforts of farmers and ANV members only. There is, for instance, often a strong connection with local LTO departments. These departments of LTO, or perhaps other involved businesses, often help with the founding of a agricultural cooperative or collective. The reason for foundation of a specific ARC is often a combination of these factors.

Oerlemans, Hees, and Guldemond (2006) describe what the main goals and activities of ANV's are while van Dijk et al (2015), Renting and van der Ploeg (2001) and Glasbergen (2000) focus on regional environmental cooperatives. Taken into account, once again, is the mutual variation in many (organizational) aspects of ARC's. The most common goals mentioned within these researches are:

1. Nature conservation and landscape management;
2. Promoting sustainable and economically sound agriculture and horticulture;
3. Wildlife protection;
4. Reduction of environmental pollution on member farms;
5. Building on alignment of farmers, state, and society;

6. Stimulate agri-tourism;
7. Access to finance for activities;
8. Facilitating agri-environmental subsidy requests;
9. Facilitating regional development, projects, experiments and innovations;
10. Lobbying on behalf of members (creating room for manoeuvre regarding regulations);
11. Implementing new legislations and regulations most effectively (also build tools and instruments for measurements).

Nature and landscape management, reduction of pollution, promoting sustainable agriculture, and facilitating projects are all part of the sustainable transition of agriculture. A agricultural regional cooperative supports this transition and works on the interlinkages between agriculture, state and society (Wiskerke, Bock, Stuiver, & Renting, 2003). Research by van Dijk et al (2015) concludes that, in case of ditch bank management and meadow bird protection, the facilitation of environmental cooperatives positively influences farmers' intentions to participate in collective agri-environmental schemes.

Building on the alignment of farmers and state is, for a great deal, the negotiating on- and the implementing of- new regulations. Through the lobbying activities ARC's try to create room for manoeuvre at farm-level. Since often a wide variety of possibilities is at hand to realize the implementation of regulations and to reach the environmental goals, the approaches of ARC's differ regularly (De Bruin & van der Ploeg, 1992). ARC's support farmers in the implementation of new ways to comply with the new legislations. By using the room for finding your own approach and solutions, granted by the state, they search for effective ways to reach the new goals. Examples of this implementation nowadays are supporting and facilitating the use of "De Kringloopwijzer", meadow bird protection, and new local products.

ARC's often try to bring as much local parties together as possible, however the main focus of most ARC's remain on the issues of farmers' members. ARC's attempt to improve the farming practices within the region and support the craftsmanship of farmers' members on their competences to innovate, produce local foods, and adapt to the local environmental restrictions and opportunities (Leeuwis, 1993; Eshuis, Stuiver, Verhoeven, & van der Ploeg, 2001)

The main activities of ARV's are considered to be (Oerlemans, Hees, & Guldemond, 2006):

1) Stimulate and execute agricultural nature management activities, considering:

- Landscape elements (e.g. forest edges, hedgerows)
- Species management & land management (e.g. meadow birds, botanicals)
- Edge management (e.g. arable-, fauna- and floral edges, ditch edges)
- Supporting and facilitating SAN ("Subsidieregeling Agrarisch Natuurbeheer") subsidy requests of members
- Compiling farm specific nature plans (Bedrijfsnatuurplan)
- Closing SAN area packages
- Providing information and courses on agrarian nature management.
- A powerful instrument that ANV's use is "farmers learning farmers" both about the SAN scheme itself and on concrete management measures

2) Stimulating and implementing environmental measures:

- Reduce mineral losses, mineral balance, spills through flushing, conduct and design measurements tools

3) Policy management and cooperation with other partners:

- Point of contact for regional issues, policy, and projects related to environment
- Influence decision-making regarding nature policy
- Engage citizens and civil society organizations to increase support for activities

4) Contribution to research and knowledge building:

- Testing of measures, gaining experience and knowledge to improve results of agricultural nature management

5) Development, improvement and facilitation of differentiation activities of members:

- Private services: recreation, agriculture and care, water services, regional products
- Social services: increase accessibility, public facilities, communication with public

6) Execution of projects and agricultural work:

- Contractor work for municipalities / land managers / individuals
- Implementation of projects for province and national government

3.5. Developments and trends of ARC's

Within this section SRQ 5: "What are current and future trends in the development of ARC's?" is answered.

Many new ARC's established and starting up

Main reason for the peak of founding ARC's is the changed nature conservation policy. The subsidy requests, regarding e.g. meadow bird management and flower edges, from 2016 onwards needed to be filed by a larger collective.

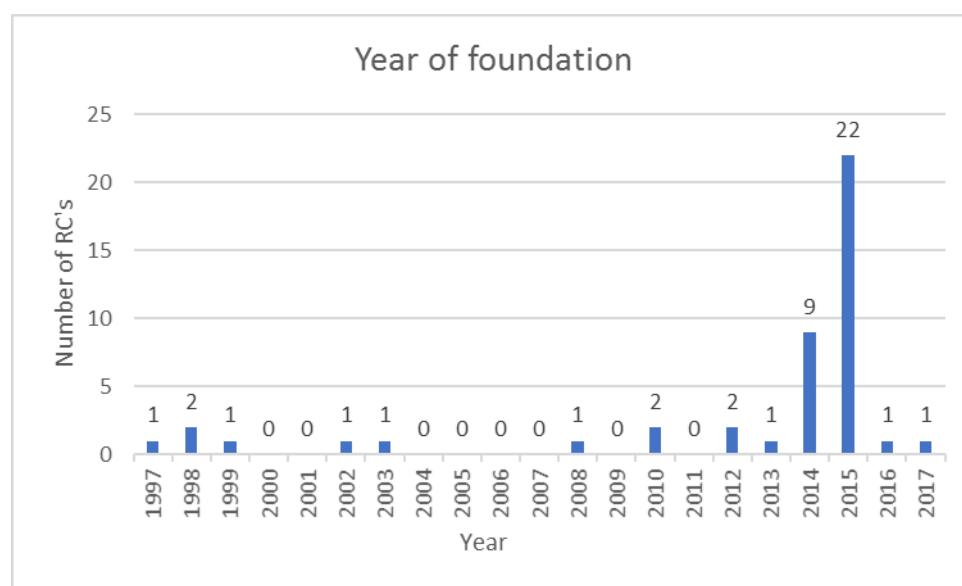


Figure 4: Timeline showing the number of ARC's founded in a specific year

Figure 2 shows that 69% of the ARC's of the database of this paper has been founded in the years of 2014 and 2015 while all of them have been founded within the last 20 years. Meaning that, at this point of time, many of the ARC's do not have significant experience in their current organizational form. Presumably many of the ARC's founded this recently, will still be in explorative phases. It is possible that the importance of their existence to members is yet to be proven, that different approaches and activities are still explored, and that their main goals are not concretized to the desired levels yet. To what extent these assumptions are present nowadays is reviewed in the interviews. The interviews will shed some light on whether the start-up phase has been completed and whether this was a comparable event for ARC's in the Netherlands.

SCAN and the collective approach

The most important reason for the recent rise in number of ARC's in the Netherlands is the changing policy regarding agricultural nature and landscape management. The new policy subscribes that farmers or other landowners are no longer able to request subsidies for landscape and nature management individually. From the 1st of January 2016 onwards the granting of subsidies is executed through certified organizations only. Goal of the changes in policies are to distribute more of the responsibility to localities and to enforce a united approach on the environmental development of the rural areas. First results of the changes are the emerge of many agricultural regional cooperatives also due to the merging of many ANV's.

To support the (newly founded) regional organizations, and to help with the preparations regarding the transition to becoming the financial beneficiaries of environmental grants, SCAN (Stichting Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer) has been founded. SCAN was founded by a number of umbrella organizations: BoerenNatuur.nl, Natuurlijk Platteland Oost, Natuurrijk Limburg, LTO Noord, Veelzijdig Boerenland and ZLTO. One of the activities of SCAN was helping ARC's which require a certification for dealing with agri-environment subsidies for farmers. The certification for becoming a beneficiary of subsidies is executed by the province. After facilitating the start of the collective system, and having helped the 40 collectives within the system, SCAN distributed their ongoing tasks to BoerenNatuur.nl and SCAN itself was terminated.

BoerenNatuur.nl, also one of the founders of SCAN, is an association of the 40 regional organizations which are certified to be dealing with environmental subsidies for farmers. This association ensures the united voice of the regional organizations dealing with the development of the rural areas. BoerenNatuur.nl generates knowledge, diffuses knowledge, discusses with the government and other societal organisations, and provides communication on behalf of their members both internally and externally.

Increasing environmental responsibility

There is a shift of responsibility regarding environmental policies, once mainly top-down has become more and more bottom-up focused. The responsibility for the environment and its maintenance has increasingly been transferred to farmers, local parties and local governments. Instead of one general national policy more often a specific area approach is taken to implement the general legislations and regulations. Area specific tools are designed and experimented with by local parties such as ARC's.

4. The interviews

Three interviews are held to provide insight on ARC's in the Netherlands. The interviews focus on the research questions and findings of this paper. This chapter uses the structure of the interview questions and summarizes the most important information received per question.

4.1. Introducing the interviewees

The interview questions and the summaries of the interviews are added to the Appendix of this paper, respectively Appendix 4 and 6. The interview method is explained in section 2.3., this section will elaborate on the interviewees. Introducing the interviewees:

- Jos Roemaat
- Dick Looman
- Goos Lier

Jos Roemaat was involved in the start-up phase of the regional collective system in the Netherlands. Roemaat is familiar with the organizations SCAN and Boerennatuur.nl and is also chairman of Platteland Oost. Roemaat is selected for this research because of his expertise and experience with ARC's and the governance and foundation of these organizations.

Dick Looman is a dairy farmer in Zelhem (NL) and he is chairman of the VALA. The VALA is a regional agricultural collective in the east of the Netherlands. The VALA exists out of 8 ANV's which are partners within the collective. Looman is selected for his experience with this agricultural regional collective which is also member of the 41 SCAN collectives of the Netherlands.

Goos Lier is a researcher at Saxion Deventer partially working for ARC Het Westerkwartier in the province of Drenthe. He is also familiar with ARC Zuidwest Drenthe. Both these ARC's are not member of the SCAN collectives and therefore are not dealing with the agricultural nature conservation subsidy requests of members. At the moment Lier is doing research on the financial structures of ARC's and Het Westerkwartier specifically, while he is helping the board of Het Westerkwartier with developing a strategy for coming years.

4.2. Results of the interviews

Comparing organizations

The first question of the interview focused on the comparability and differences of four organizations found in the agricultural sector: agricultural regional cooperatives (ARC's), agricultural nature associations (ANV's), environmental cooperatives, and agricultural regional collectives. All three interviewees found that the motives, goals and mission of these four are highly comparable. However, despite the comparability, there are some fundamental differences.

Starting with environmental cooperatives. These cooperatives merely focused on manure policy, mineral balances, and trying to lobby for the interests of the farmer members. Topics dealt with by environmental cooperatives were therefore mostly related to the mineral and manure discussions present in the 1990s. Nowadays the environmental cooperatives have disappeared or merged with other parties such as ANV's and ARC's. To the question whether the ARC's are the environmental cooperatives of nowadays all interviewees indicated to recognize similarities. Although they have different goals and different issues to deal with both

were a reaction to changing policies. Despite these similarities ARC's cannot be seen as the follow-ups of environmental cooperatives.

Agricultural collectives are relatively new in the Netherlands. Although nature associations have been present for a long time, the agricultural collectives have all been founded around the year 2015. This is a result of the policy changes which obligated farmers to run their environmental subsidies through collectives. Goals of this policy are for example to increase the efficiency of the subsidy request system and to improve the collaboration between government and the agricultural sector. Agricultural collectives are specifically founded to facilitate all contractual tasks related to the environmental subsidies. Many ANV's therefore started partnerships with other ANV's and agricultural collectives, or merged into one collective, to represent and facilitate the farmers within their regions. Interviewees indicated that directors of ANV's and other regional active managers were challenged by the government and SCAN to set up the agricultural collectives. They were challenged to seek collaborations with other ANV's or similar parties to increase their organizational size. A certain size of operations was required since the government decided to aim for (about) 40 collectives covering all regions in the Netherlands.

The ANV's have been present for a long time, some ANV's exist for longer than 60 years. The ANV's in the Netherlands are going through some changes. Since 2015 obligated farmers to handle their subsidy requests through an agricultural collective many of the ANV's partnered with an agricultural collective. For example the VALA, an agricultural collective in the east of the Netherlands, is a collaboration of 8 ANV's and a number of other local parties. In this case the ANV's are sometimes referred to as the "workforce" of the agricultural collective. Most collectives have boards and often, especially if their area of operations is relatively big, area representatives are assigned to represent the needs of the different areas.

The subject of interest in this paper is ARC's. Interviewees stated that ARC's are often similar organizations compared to agricultural collectives and ANV's. There are however some differences. One fundamental difference is the agricultural component of regional cooperatives. Although this paper focused is on agricultural regional cooperatives the interviewees did not fail to mention that a regional cooperative does not need to be an agricultural one. There are many examples of regional cooperatives which either have nothing to do with agriculture or have many other non-agricultural activities as well. And when compared to the other organizational names there are obvious differences, an agricultural collective is founded for contractual subsidy requests, an ANV is often a group of farmers working on nature and landscape only (and nowadays often partner of an collective), while environmental cooperatives seem to be extinct. That being said, it is interesting to acknowledge the developments regarding agricultural collectives and ANV's. A lot of collaborations are started to form the collectives and stated in the interviews is that many of these collective will keep developing their organization and their activities. There is a possibility that for instance the VALA will lose the term agricultural in the future, meaning that more and broader activities will be carried out. In this case it would not be unlikely to either transform the VALA in a regional cooperative or to lose the A of agriculture. These developments, and especially the search for additional regional activities and finding new ways to earn money, will make the collectives and the regional cooperatives increasingly similar.

Summary of comparing organizations

The organizations are indeed comparable they are however not the same. Mergers of ARC's, ANV's and agricultural collectives are not uncommon. The interviewees expect more (intensive) collaborations between the different regional organizations. The search for additional activities by ANV's, agricultural collectives and ARC's will increasingly lead to collaborations, however will also make them competitors.

The most important activities of ARC's

According to the interviewees the most important activities of ARC's are: executing the ANLB (agri-environmental landscape management), being the central point of contact for regional issues and topics, build bridges between regional parties, and develop and share knowledge.

Stated in the interviews is the importance of projects. ARC's often focus on projects they currently facilitate. Recognized by the specialists is the regional influence on the activities of ARC's. The activities are very depending on the opportunities within the areas they operate.

Regional differences

When looked at the 41 SCAN collectives one may notice the large differences in size and amount of ARC's per province. The third question in the interview looked at the factors that determine the differences in organization size.

Figure 5 shows the regional specific differences which are drawn on the map with the 41 SCAN collectives. A very determinative difference is the presence and amount of pasture birds. There is a lot of subsidy available for pasture bird protection and a small group of farmers can receive a relatively large amount of funding for pasture bird protection. When forming the collectives the expected turnover was one of the measurements used to determine whether a collective needed to expand their operating area or not. Since collectives

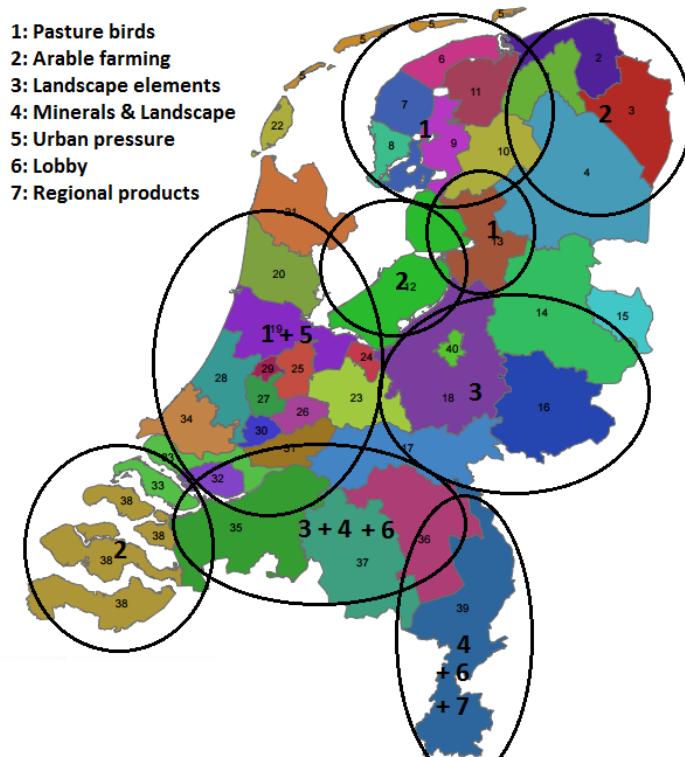


Figure 5: Regional specifics

within pasture bird regions received a lot of subsidy these collectives did not experience the same pressure to expand compared to regions on the east side of the Netherlands. The other differences shown on the map indicate the typical specifics of these regions. Arable farming is mentioned as a focus in certain parts of the Netherlands, this focus results into projects with

fields margins (margins with herbs and flowers), projects increasing biodiversity, and projects increasing the number of field birds (in Dutch: akkervogels), bees and butterflies.

There are, next to the regional specifics, a number of other reasons which explain the differences in size. These are:

- Formation issues (personal stubbornness, non-willingness to collaborate, focus on defending own interests, historical tensions, and different religions);
- Disconnection due to area diversity (examples are cultural differences, differences in resident intensity, different soil types and differences in activities);
- Disconnection between directors (or lack of directors);
- Pressure to collaborate (for example from government and SCAN);
- Amount of turnover;
- Presence and sales of regional products.

These are especially reasons not to collaborate. These reasons have all occurred during the formation process. In some occasions these reasons could be overcome while there are a number of examples where the formation of the collaboration failed.

The benefits of size

Interviewees elaborated on the benefits and downsides of a big or a small ARC. Overall the interviewees preferred an average to large organization since otherwise the costs of governance is too high and the scale of operations is low. They indicate these reasons, high overhead costs and small scale (less power), as biggest downsides of small ARC's. The bigger and average ARC's enjoy better efficiency which on average means that a bigger part of the funds can be used for projects and on-farm activities. Downside of the bigger ARC's is the relatively large distance to their members, and the additional risk of disconnection between directors and members. A common method to deal with this risk is the implementation of area representatives. This also accounts for dealing with area diversity.

Another benefit of the larger organizations is that it is easier to grow to a regional centre for local (agricultural and landscape) issues. Many ARC's collaborate with local governments and organizations such as Staatsbosbeheer (national forestry management) and Natuurmonumenten (Dutch association for protection of nature), while doing so they increasingly become an important partner in the network related to nature and agricultural issues. For smaller organizations it is a lot harder to become a centre for regional issues.

Developments and trends

Interviewees acknowledged that many of the ARC's in the Netherlands are still scanning for the best ways of controlling the organization and its activities. Some ARC's had a head start and started to look for the best approaches while others were still discussing who to collaborate with. Some ARC's are therefore further in the organization development than others. However what many ARC's have in common is the search for additional activities. The trend is to increasingly find ways to initiate stable cashflows aside of the subsidized activities. Many ARC's will become increasingly independent and this often means broadening the scope of the organizations to generate additional income. Which kind of activities are taken in consideration and which are executed is very dependent on which opportunities occur in those specific regions. The VALA for instance is a trader in wood chips and helps the municipality with the granting of tree cutting permits.

The formation of the regional agricultural collectives has been relatively fast since every region was obligated to participate by the government. Because of the pressure and the sudden motivation to collaborate many new organizations (and partnerships) are formed. And now still, about 2 to 3 years after the implementation of the collective approach, there is movement and collaborations are started or terminated. It is likely that coming years more collaborations will be started. ARC's found their own ways of handling business and now they will increasingly look at how other parties perform. Especially if the agri-environmental regulations, and very important subsidies, will change a number of ARC's will deal with these changes by collaborating with others. Also because for a number of ARC's the future will not be as bright as hoped. Especially the smaller ARC's could run into difficulties which they will not be able to overcome individually.

The interviewees expect that ARC's will increasingly become involved in the rural policy making. ARC's already collaborate with municipalities more often and because of the collective approach the involvement seems to become higher every year. Many ARC's also acknowledge this as one of their goals.

Through the years, and especially in the nineties, farmers have given away the management of nature and landscape. Within those years farmers received less rewards, both financially and personally, for their labor related to the management of nature and the importance of this management was often not recognized. However there is an ongoing trend of taking back the responsibility for the management of nature and landscape. While some farmers experienced the drawbacks of farming close to nature preserve areas and lost the motivation for nature preservation, the positivity is slowly returning. An increasingly larger group recognizes both the importance and the opportunities of taking care of nature and landscape in their personal surroundings.

Because of the developments of ARC's in the Netherlands the differences between them will increase. While most ARC's start with a small number of projects and/or the contractual subsidy related work, many ARC's are broadening their scope and expanding. This means that the individual differences are growing. An example of an increasing difference is size. While one ARC is investing a lot in new projects the other is only organizing the necessary activities for the subsidy requests. Despite what would be the better performing organization the differences between them increase.

Summarizing the developments and trends indicated by interviewees:

- Many new ARC's established and starting up
- Additional activities/ Increasing differentiation
- Increasing collaboration with both ARC's and other parties
- Increasing local involvement
- Increasing environmental responsibility

Differences in activities and organizational structure

The following two questions interviewees were asked to elaborate on the differences in activities and organizational structure between ARC's in the Netherlands. Interviewees already indicated the importance of local and regional opportunities and that the availability of such opportunities are very determinative for the activities of ARC's.

The 40 regional agricultural collectives all have been founded according to specific demands and guidelines provided by the government. Therefore the core of many ARC's is similar. The ARC's not included in the collective agreement are also cooperatives, and therefore, when looked at organizational structure, they are built the same as the ARC's which are included. Some core principles of these cooperatives are: all members are equal, they have an economic perspective, work on knowledge and innovation development, and representing the interests of the members. While these core principles are very common and similar for many ARC's the approaches and activities can be widely varying due to regional and personal differences. That being said, the majority of ARC's share the same focus on agriculture, nature, and landscape management. A minority of ARC's expanded their scope and has activities outside the agricultural sector, although interviewees foresee a growth in this number. While, especially in 2015 after the implementation, the differences between ARC's and regional agricultural collectives were easily pointed out, nowadays these differences are becoming harder to define. The differences were that regional agricultural collectives focused only on contractual, subsidy related, work while ARC's were often much broader in their activities. Since agricultural collectives are broadening their scope of activities this difference is slowly disappearing.

Subsidy requests

Question eight of the interview asked interviewees about the opportunities of joining the 41 collectives. The short answer is that ARC's are not able to join the 41 collectives. These collectives have been formed with help of SCAN which is now terminated. The 41 collectives are granted the rights to facilitate farmers in their subsidy requests and, if no unforeseen developments occur, no other organizations will join the collectives. A possibility of an ARC joining these collectives is when an ARC merges with one of the ARC's already included in the collectives program.

Dependency of subsidy

Nowadays most of the ARC's turnover is generated through receiving subsidies. Although ARC's increasingly look for additional activities these are often very marginal. The ARC's are therefore highly depending on subsidies of the government, while for collectives dealing with subsidies is their primary task.

Developments of ARC's

The final question of the interview provided interviewees with the opportunity to elaborate on their expectations regarding the activities of ARC's in the Netherlands. Interviewees indicated that ARC's are actively developing their scope of activities and this will further continue in the coming years. Collaboration between ARC's is likely to increase. Also the intensity of collaborations will increase whereas trust between ARC's and other parties is growing. For example the ARC's who collaborate with municipalities will continue to build on their relationship.

5. Discussion

For this paper three interviews were held. Information presented in chapter 4 is based on the opinions, expectations, experience and insights of these three interviewees. Important to acknowledge is that the interviewees of this research are carefully selected taken into account the purpose of this study.

The interviews are executed by the author of this paper. Although the author did not purposefully share his opinion, during the open dialogues the interviewer did react to the thoughts of the interviewees, this could influence the answers given by the interviewees. Whereas all interviews are held by the same author there is a potential risk of errors made by the author during the interviews and the processing of the interviews. When processing the information received during the interviews the author used his personal judgement to decide what to include in the results.

This paper is written to provide insight into ARC's in the Netherlands. This paper is not a scientific review of ARC's, which could be a topic of further research. For example the differences between Dutch ARC's are described according to the information given by the interviewees. The interviewees are not a representative sample.

This paper has described the history, the presence, the core activities, and the trends related to ARC's in the Netherlands. This paper has shown the differences between different (agricultural) regional organizations and has explained the differences between ARC's. Although the rise of the ARC's has been explained there is still more to write about these organizations. These organizations are continuously developing and changing as are the policies related to them. Further in-depth research is required to get insight into all the details of these organizations.

6. Conclusion

The conclusion provides short answers to the research questions. First the specific research questions are answered and afterwards the general research question is answered.

SRQ 1: What are Agricultural Regional Cooperatives (ARC's)?

The beginning of this paper defines agricultural regional cooperatives (ARC's). Important to note is the demarcation by using this name. This paper deliberately focuses on regional cooperatives active in the agricultural sector, while regional cooperatives outside the agricultural sector also exist. The original definition given to ARC's was the following definition of environmental cooperatives (Renting & Van der Ploeg, 2001):

- *"Environmental cooperatives are innovative associations of farmers based at local or regional level, which promote and organize activities related to sustainable agriculture and rural development in their locale. They also claim to be actively involved in the formulation and realization of adequate rural policies within their operational boundaries."*

The interviewees pointed out that this definition is not suitable for ARC's. Despite the fact that non-agricultural regional cooperative exist, also agricultural regional cooperative exist with non-farmer members. Also the scope of activities of ARC's can be wider than promoting and organizing activities related to sustainable agriculture. A better definition would be:

- Agricultural regional cooperatives are innovative groups of local and regional parties and entrepreneurs collaborating to improve the region. Activities often aim to increase sustainability of the region, improving the nature and landscape of the region and to improve farming techniques.

The definition remains broad since the differences between ARC's are relatively large.

SRQ 2: What is the history of ARC's in the Netherlands?

The history of ARC's is explained by looking at the history of both ANV's and nature conservation policy. The similarities with environmental cooperatives are pointed out by interviewees although ARC's are not the same organizations. Environmental cooperatives where founded in the nineties while the need for them was high, however these organizations slowly disappeared as the nature conservation policy and manure policies changed. Agricultural regional cooperatives are often the result of mergers between ANV's and other groups of farmers. These cooperatives are the result of specific needs of the founders. The need for involvement in policy making and the implementing of new agricultural policies is high. Also the need to reduce the disconnection with both society and nature is an emerging point of attention. Where ARC's at first were primarily focused on sustainable agricultural and environmental development, they increasingly become involved in other activities. Nature conservation policy and societal attention for sustainability of agriculture has been very determinative for the rise of ARC's. ARC's have varying backgrounds, while one is indeed a group of farmers and ANV's the other can be a collaboration between educational institutes and local businesses. While many ARC's have farmer members the activities carried out by ARC's become increasingly broad. The ARC's are developing towards regional organizations for the sustainable development of the region and they are increasingly generating their own income.

SRQ 3: How many ARC's are currently actively involved in the agricultural sector and in which regions do these ARC's operate?

The map presented in section 3.3. shows the number of ARC's and their locations. The database designed for this paper contains 45 ARC's in the Netherlands of which 40 are involved in the national system of collectives for nature conservation subsidies.

SRQ 4: What are the core activities of ARC's nowadays?

The most common activities mentioned within literature and other sources of information are:

1. Nature conservation and landscape management;
2. Promoting sustainable and economically sound agriculture and horticulture;
3. Wildlife protection;
4. Reduction of environmental pollution on member farms;
5. Building on alignment of farmers, state, and society;
6. Stimulate agri-tourism;
7. Access to finance for activities;
8. Facilitating agri-environmental subsidy requests;
9. Facilitating regional development, projects, experiments and innovations;
10. Lobbying on behalf of members (creating room for manoeuvre regarding regulations);
11. Implementing new legislations and regulations most effectively (also build tools and instruments for measurements).

These goals were translated into activities and presented in the interviews. Interviewees were given the opportunity to define the core activities of ARC's for themselves. According to the interviewees the most important activities of ARC's are: executing the ANLb (agri-environmental landscape management), being the central point of contact for regional issues and topics, build bridges between regional parties, and develop and share knowledge.

SRQ 5: What are current and future trends in the development of ARC's?

Summarizing the developments and trends indicated in this paper:

- Many new ARC's established and starting up
- SCAN and the collective approach
- Additional activities/ Increasing differentiation
- Increasing collaboration with both ARC's and other parties
- Increasing local involvement
- Increasing environmental responsibility

Many new ARC's established and starting up

Interviewees acknowledged that many of the ARC's in the Netherlands are still scanning for the best ways of controlling the organization. Some ARC's had a head start and started to look for the best approaches soon while others were still discussing who to collaborate with. Some ARC's are therefore obviously further in their development than others.

SCAN and the collective approach

Interviewees mentioned that this trend occurred in the years 2014 and 2015 and that, while the collective approach is still used, this is not a trend anymore and SCAN is non-existent nowadays. The collective approach is now the basis of the nature conservation policy.

Additional activities/ Increasing differentiation

Many ARC's search for additional activities. The trend is to increasingly find ways to initiate stable cashflows aside of the subsidized activities. Many ARC's aim to become increasingly independent and this often means broadening the scope of the organizations to generate additional income. Which kind of activities are taken in consideration and which are executed is very dependent on the region specific opportunities.

Because of the broadening activities of ARC's in the Netherlands the differences between ARC's is increasing. While most ARC's start with a small number of projects and/or the contractual subsidy related work, many ARC's are broadening their scope and expanding. This means that the diversity between ARC's is growing.

Increasing collaboration with both ARC's and other parties

The formation of the regional agricultural collectives went fast since every region was obligated to participate by the government. Because of the pressure and the sudden motivation to collaborate many new organizations (and partnerships) are formed. And still new collaborations are started. ARC's have been able to find their own ways of handling business and they will increasingly look at how other parties perform. Especially if the agri-environmental regulations, and very important subsidies, will change it is highly likely that a number of ARC's will deal with these changes by collaborating. Especially the smaller ARC's could run into difficulties which they will not be able to overcome individually.

Increased local involvement

ARC's will increasingly become involved in the rural policy making. ARC's already collaborate with municipalities more often and because of the collective approach the involvement seems to become higher every year. Many ARC's also acknowledge this as one of their goals.

Increasing environmental responsibility

Through the years, and especially the nineties, farmers have given away the management of nature and landscape. Within those years farmers received less rewards, both financially as personally, for their labor related to the management of nature and the importance of this management was often not recognized. However there is a trend of taking back the responsibility for the management of nature and landscape. Many ARC's and farmers have recognized both the importance and the opportunities of taking care of nature and landscape in their personal surroundings.

GRQ: How have ARC's developed over time and how can the rise of ARC's in the Netherlands be explained?

Before concluding on the rise of ARC's in the Netherlands it is important to note that the self-made demarcation, in this paper called ARC, includes organizations participating in the national system of collectives for agri-environment subsidies and organizations which are not participating in this system. Participating ARC's are different from non-participating ARC's

while in this paper they are put together as one. Despite the developments that decrease the differences between participating ARC's and non-participating ARC's, e.g. broadening of activities, it is important to acknowledge this.

Although ARC's have varying backgrounds there are similarities. The majority of ARC's is founded by groups of farmers, ANV's and with the support of some other local parties. While at first these organizations were primarily focused on increasing the agricultural sustainability and improving the farming styles within their specific regions their scope of activities is broadening. A number of ARC's became regional partners for municipalities and provinces in dealing with agriculturally related issues and they help facilitate nature and landscape management. The number of activities and the level of collaboration with local and regional parties is highly varying. Some ARC's merely execute their primary tasks related to subsidy requests of farmers while others are actively involved in the regional policy making.

The rise of ARC's can be explained through the collective approach implemented in 2015. Since 2015 farmers are obligated to request their nature conservation subsidies by using a collective. This is the main reason that many ARC's have been founded within the years 2014 and 2015. Another reason for the rise of ARC's is the need for decreasing the disconnection between farming and society and increasing the sustainability of the region. Through collaborating in an ARC farmers become actively involved in their locale and they can work on (new) products, services, and activities. The sustainable development of the rural area is partially facilitated by ARC's.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Dutch regional organizations

Appendix 2: List of non-included organizations

Appendix 3: List of regional organisations of the NCR 2016

Appendix 4: Interview format

Appendix 5: Research overview

Appendix 6: Summaries of the interviews

Appendix 1: List of Dutch regional organizations

	Name	Location	Founders	Year	Cer.
1	Collectief Groningen West	Leek	3 ANV's	2014	CAN
2	Agrarisch Natuur- en Landschapscollectief Midden-Groningen	Scharmer	4 ANV's	2015	CAN
3	Agrarische Natuurvereniging Oost Groningen	Wedde	Collective since 2015	2003	CAN
4	Coöperatie Het Drents Collectief U.A.	Rolde	ANV and collective	2017	CAN
5	Agrarische Natuurvereniging "Waddenvogels"	Hollum	3 ANV's	2012	CAN
6	Coöperatieve vereniging Coöperatie Agrarisch Collectief Waadrâne UA	Brantgum	2 ANV's	2014	CAN
7	Coöperatieve vereniging Westergo UA	Oudega	6 ANV's	2015	CAN
8	Coöperatieve Vereniging Südwestkust UA	Wons	2 ANV's	2015	CAN
9	Gebiedscoöperatie It Lege Midden U.A.	Aldeboarn	5 ANV's	2014	CAN
10	ELAN Agrarische Natuurverenigingen Zuidoost Friesland	Beetsterzwaag	5 ANV's	2010	CAN
11	Noardlike Frykske Wâlden	Damwald/ Burgum	6 departments of agricultural landscape- and naturemanagement	2002	CAN
12	Coöperatie Flevolands Agrarisch Collectief U.A.	Zeewolde	6 ANV's + LTO	2015	CAN
13	Coöperatieve Agrarische Natuur Collectief Noordwest Overijssel UA	Kampen	4 ANV's	2014	CAN
14	Coöperatieve Agrarisch Natuur Collectief Midden Overijssel UA	Ambt Delden	8 ANV's	2014	CAN
15	Coöperatie Gebiedscollectief Noordoost-Twente U.A.	Deurningen	Landowners and users	2013	CAN
16	Coöperatieve Vereniging Agrarisch Landschap Achterhoek U.A.	Vorden	6 ANV's	2012	CAN
17	Coöperatieve Natuurbeheervereniging Collectief Rivierenland U.A.	Echteld	6 ANV's	2015	CAN
18	Coöperatief Agrarisch Natuur Collectief Veluwe U.A.	Nijkerk	3 ANV's, Natuur- en Milieucoöperatie, Stichting biotoopverbetering a.o.	2015	CAN
19	Gebiedscoöperatie Noord-Holland Zuid U.A.	Amstelveen	ANV's, in total 120 farmers	2014	CAN
20	Vereniging Agrarisch natuur- en landschapsbeheer Water, Land en Dijken	Purmerend	Farmers, volunteers and civilians.	2008	CAN
21	Vereniging Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Hollands Noorden	Obdam	3 ANV's	2015	CAN
22	Agrarische Natuur- en Landschapsvereniging De Lieuw Texel	Oudeschild	ANV	1998	
23	Coöperatie Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Utrecht Oost U.A.	Leusden	4 ANV's, LTO, Utrechts Particulier Grondbezit	2015	CAN
24	Collectief Eemland	Bunschoten-Spakenburg	ANV	2016	CAN

25	Gebiedscoöperatie Rijn Vecht en Venen U.A.	Loenen aan de Vecht	2 ANV's + 3 LTO departments	2014	CAN
26	Agrarische natuur & landschapsvereniging "De Lopikerwaard e.o."	IJsselstein	ANV	1999	CAN
27	Vereniging Agrarisch Natuur- en Landschapsbeheer Rijn & Gouwe Wiericke	Bodegraven	4 ANV's	2015	CAN
28	Agrarische Natuurvereniging "De Hollandse Venen"	Zevenhoven	ANV	1998	CAN
29	Coöperatie De Groene Klaver U.A.	Voorschoten	4 ANV's	2015	CAN
30	Coöperatief Agrarisch Collectief Krimpenerwaard U.A.	Bergambacht	ANV	2015	CAN
31	Collectief Alblasserwaard/Vijfheerenlanden Coöperatieve U.A.	Goudriaan	Mainly livestock farmers	2015	CAN
32	Coöperatie Collectief Hoeksche Waard UA	Strijen	Farmers, (LTO, NAV, Deltanatuurproducten a.o.)	2015	CAN
33	Coöperatief Agrarisch Collectief Zuidhollandse Eilanden U.A.	Sommelsdijk		2015	CAN
34	Coöperatie Agrarisch collectief Midden-Delfland U.A	Schiphol	ANV, Vockestaert, Schaapskudde	2015	CAN
35	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer West-Brabant u.a.	Sprundel	6 ANV's	2015	CAN
36	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Midden-Brabant U.A.	Vlijmen	8 ANV's +PLV's	2015	CAN
37	Coöperatief Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Oost-Brabant UA	Sambeek	6 ANV's + Milieucoöperatie PION	2015	CAN
38	Coöperatie Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer U.A. (Poldernatuur Zeeland)	Colijnsplaat	9 ANV's	2015	CAN
39	Coöperatie Natuurrijk Limburg u.a.	Roermond	Farmers, Plattelandscoopératie, Vereniging Innovatief Platteland, a.o.	2015	CAN
40	Coöperatieve Vereniging Collectief Deltaplan Landschap U.A.	Driebergen-Rijsenburg	Farmers, Louis Bolk institute, and other associations,	2014	CAN
41	Gebiedscoöperatie Oregional U.A.	Aerdt	Farmers	2010	
42	Coöperative Vereniging Particulier Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Winterswijk en omstreken UA	Winterswijk Meddo	Farmers, De Wildbeheereenheid Winterswijk and environmental associations	1997	
43	Gebiedscoöperatie Zuidwest Drenthe UA	Ruinerwold	Multiple themes, including agricultural	2015	
44	Gebiedscoöperatie IJsseldelta UA	Hasselt	Multiple themes, including agricultural	2015	
45	Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier BA	Noordhorn	2 ANV's, SBB, and other landscape organizations	2014	

* Year= Year of establishment ; Cer.= Certification for CAN (Collectief Agrarisch Natuurbeheer)

Appendix 2: List of non-included organizations

1	Gebiedscoöperatie Rivierenland B.A.	Geldermalsen
2	Gebiedscoöperatie Holwerd aan Zee U.A.	Holwerd
3	GEBIEDSCOÖPERATIE ALBLASSERPOORT U.A.	Bleskensgraaf
4	Gebiedscoöperatie Voedsellokaal Oosterwold U.A.	Huizen
5	Gebiedscoöperatie Tussen Rijn en Waal B.A.	Lienden
6	Gebiedscoöperatie Boerderijweg en omgeving U.A.	Heibloem
7	Coöperatie HoekscheWaardDuurzaam UA	Numansdorp
8	Coöperatie Gastvrije Randmeren UA	Harderwijk
9	Gebiedscoöperatie O-gen UA	Scherpenzeel
10	Coöperatie Brainport Park UA	Eindhoven
11	Coöperatieve Melkslijtersvereeniging De Veluwezoom (V.Z.) UA	Oosterbeek
12	Natuurcoöperatie Baarderadiel UA	Baard
13	Koöperasje DoarpenLân UA	Beetsterzwaag
14	Coöperatie De Weerribben UA	Marijenkampen

1	Diverse burgerorganisaties. Geen agrariërs.	Burger initiatief (o.a. duurzame energie)
2	Geen agrariërs	Werkgroep voor aantrekkelijker maken van Holwerd.
3	Weinig info	Gebiedsplatform voor recreatie en tourisme.
4	Weinig info	Verwerven, beheren, veredelen, exploiteren van gebiedsgronden en woonconcepten.
5	Weinig info	Regionale producten en agrotourisme, niet bekend of deze actief is.
6	1 melkveehouder, weinig info.	
7	Particulieren. Geen agrariërs	Duurzame energieprojecten.
8	Samenwerking tussen gemeenten. Geen agrariërs.	
9	Gemeenten en andere belangenorganisaties. Geen agrariërs.	Regio aantrekkelijker maken. Wonen, werken en ondernemen.
10	Veel lokale bedrijven. Geen agrariërs	Stadspark Brainport Park.
11	Winkel in het centrum van Oosterbeek.	Niet actief.
12	Geen agrariërs	Dieren- en plantentuinen.
13	Verscheidene belanghebbende. Geen agrarische ledengroep.	Landschappen, natuur en cultuur, duurzame landbouw en energiehuishouding.
14	Geen melkveehouders. SBB, riettelers en natuurbeheerders.	Samenwerking tussen Staatsbosbeheer (SBB) en rietteler / natuurbeheerders

Appendix 3: List of regional organisations of the NCR 2016

ma 2017-04-10 17:31

Aan:

Gieling, Dirk;

CC:

NCR - Arjen van Nuland <A.vanNuland@cooperatie.nl>;

U hebt geantwoord op 2017-04-10 20:08.

Beste Dirk,

Op verzoek van Arjen van Nuland reageer ik op je vraag.

Merel heeft inderdaad de gebiedscoöperaties als trend uitgelicht in het artikel in Coöperatie van juni 2016 (data Handelsregister KvK van februari 2016). In de toelichting staat al vermeld dat hier wat breder is gekeken dan de gangbare definitie waar bijvoorbeeld Westerkwartier, IJsseldelta en O-gen bij passen.

Ik heb een selectie gemaakt uit deze filtering, met namen en website. De coöperaties hebben verschillende soorten leden, en er zitten vermoedelijk nog enkele agrarische collectieven tussen. Er zijn 40 collectieven voor agrarisch natuur- en landschapsbeheer die zijn gebundeld via BoerenNatuur.nl (www.Boerennatuur.nl); zij hebben in meer of mindere mate ook te maken met dit onderwerp en zijn vaak ook coöperatief georganiseerd.

Coöp. HoekscheWaardDuurzaam

UA <http://www.hoekschewaardduurzaam.nl/>

Gebiedscoöperatie Rijn Vecht & Venen UA <http://rijnvechtenvenen.nl/>

Coöp. Gastvrije Randmeren UA www.gastvrijerandmeren.nl

Gebiedscoöperatie O-gen UA www.o-gen.nl

C.V. Collectief Deltaplan Landschap UA <http://www.collectiefdeltaplan.nl/>

Coöperatie Brainport Park UA www.brainportpark.nl

Landg.beh. Veluwezoom Coöp. UA landgoedbeheerveluwezoom.nl

Coöp. Ver. Winterswijk e.o. UA <http://www.agrarischenatuurverenigingpan.nl/>

Coöp. Agr. Lndsch. Achterh. UA <http://www.de-vala.nl/>

C.A.N.C. Midden Overijssel

UA <http://www.collectiefmiddenoverijssel.nl/collectief-midden-overijssel/>

Coöp. Geb.coll. N.o.-Twente
UA <http://www.gebiedscollectiefnot.nl/content/2013/11/Gebiedscollectief-Noordoost-Twente>

Geb.cooperat. ZW Drenthe UA www.gczw.d.nl

Geb.cooperat. IJsseldelta
UA <http://www.indeijsseldelta.nl/gebiedscooperatie/>

Coöp. Agr. Nat. Coll. Nw Ov.UA <http://www.collectiefnoordwestoverijssel.nl/>

Coöperatie De Weerribben UA <http://www.coopdeweerribben.nl/>

Coöperat. Ver. Súdwestkust UA <http://sudwestkust.nl/vereniging/>

Natuurcoöper. Baarderadiel UA <http://www.nkbaarderadiel.nl/contact.html>

C.v.C. Agr. Coll. Waadrâne UA <http://www.waadrane.frl/organisatie/>

Koöperaasje DoarpenLân UA <http://www.kooperaasjedoarpenlan.nl/>

Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier
BA www.gebiedscooperatiestekkerkwartier.nl

Coöp. Het Dreents Collectief UA www.anvdrenthe.nl

Wellicht is een bruikbare suggestie om in het zoekveld bij de website www.kvk.nl gebiedscoöperatie in te tikken voor een actueel overzicht?

Vanzelfsprekend zijn we benieuwd naar je bevindingen t.z.t!

Met vriendelijke groet,

Cynthia Griffioen

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Appendix 4: Interview format

Introductie

Dit onderzoek richt zich op agrarische gebiedscoöperaties (AGC's) en waarom deze steeds vaker worden opgericht. De laatste jaren zijn er relatief veel agrarische gebiedscoöperaties, agrarische collectieven, agrarisch natuurbeheer coöperaties en soortgelijke organisaties opgericht. Dit onderzoek tracht in kaart te brengen hoe deze organisaties tot stand gekomen zijn, welke activiteiten ze uitvoeren, wat de onderlinge verschillen zijn, wat de historie is en wat het belang van de grootte van de organisatie is. De volgende onderzoeksvragen zijn geformuleerd:

1. Wat zijn AGC's?
2. Wat is de geschiedenis van AGC's?
3. Hoeveel AGC's zijn op dit moment actief en in welke regio's?
4. Wat zijn de kernactiviteiten van AGC's op dit moment?
5. Wat zijn trends die de verdere ontwikkeling van AGC's beïnvloeden?

Deze onderzoeksvragen zullen antwoord moeten bieden op de hoofdvraag van dit onderzoek:
Hoe ontwikkelen AGC's zich en hoe kan de opkomst van AGC's in Nederland verklaard worden?

Wanneer een deelnemend persoon dit wenst zal de informatie verstrekt tijdens dit interview vertrouwelijk behandeld worden. Na deze introductie is er ruimte voor de geïnterviewde om zich voor te stellen en te beschrijven wat hij of zij doet in het dagelijks leven.

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Vergelijkbare organisaties

In de literatuur is veel geschreven over milieucoöperaties (Environmental cooperatives). Gebiedscoöperaties zijn meer iets van de laatste jaren, de naam geeft duidelijk aan dat het om een specifiek gebied gaat. In mijn onderzoek stel ik dat een (agrarische) gebiedscoöperatie een vernieuwde vorm of opvolger is van de milieucoöperatie. Hierbij geef ik aan dat ANV's, milieucoöperaties, en agrarische collectieven veelal dezelfde motieven, doelen en activiteiten hebben als een agrarische Gebiedscoöperatie.

1. Bent u het eens met de stelling dat deze organisaties vergelijkbaar zijn? Als er verschillen zijn, kunt u belangrijke verschillen tussen ANV's, milieucoöperaties, gebiedscoöperaties en agrarische collectieven aanduiden?

Vergelijkbaar: Ja/Nee

Gebiedscoöperatie:

ANV:

Milieucoöperatie:

Agrarische collectief:

De activiteiten, doelen, en ontwikkelingen van gebiedscoöperaties.

In mijn onderzoek heb ik een overzicht gemaakt van de meest belangrijke activiteiten van een gebiedscoöperatie.

2. Wat zijn, volgens u, de belangrijkste taken/activiteiten van een agrarische gebiedscoöperatie?

Voorbeelden	
Activiteit	Onderdelen
Stimuleren en uitvoeren van natuur onderhoud	Landschapselementen; weidevogelbeheer; SAN
Stimuleren en implementeren van duurzame oplossingen	Kringloopwijzer; mineraal verliezen; uitspoeling; ontwikkelen tools
Aanspreekpunt voor regionale vraagstukken & samenwerking lokale partijen/beleidsbepalers	Betrekken van burgers en overheden; meebeslissen in lokaal beleid
Bijdragen aan kennis ontwikkeling en overdracht	Testen van tools; uitkomsten van projecten delen
Faciliteren van differentiatie processen van leden	Ondersteunen van bedrijfsontwikkeling; recreatie, toerisme, regionale producten.
Faciliteren van projecten	Implementatie projecten voor overheid/gemeente; loonwerk

Werkgebied en aantal leden

Wanneer men kijkt naar agrarische gebiedscoöperaties en soortgelijke organisaties ziet men grote verschillen in werkgebieden en de omvang van de organisatie. In dit onderzoek tracht ik te achterhalen waarom er is gekozen voor een bepaalde grootte.

3. Kijkend naar onderstaand figuur van SCAN en de werkgebieden van de verschillende agrarische collectieven, kunt u verklaren waar de verschillen in organisatie grootte vandaan komen?

Legenda	
1 Groningen West	14 Midden Overijssel
2 Midden Groningen	15 Noord Oost Twente
3 Oost-Groningen (ANOG)	16 Achterhoek (VALA)
4 Het Drents Collectief	17 Rivierenland
5 De Waddenvogels	18 Veluwe
6 Waadrande	19 Noord-Holland Zuid
7 Westergo	20 Water, Land en Dijken
8 Südwestküst	21 Hollands Noorden
9 It Lege Midden	22 De Lieuw
10 ELAN Zuid-Oost Friesland	23 Utrecht Oost
11 Noardlike Fryske Walden	24 Ark en Eemlandschap
12 Flevoland	25 Rijn, Vecht en Venen
13 Noord West Overijssel	26 Lopikerwaard
	27 Rijn & Gouwe Wiericke
	28 De Groene Klaver
	29 De Hollandse Venen
	30 Krimpenerwaard
	31 Alblasserwaard Vijfheerenlanden
	32 Hoeksche Waard
	33 Zuid-Hollandsche Eilanden
	34 Vocksteart
	35 West Brabant
	36 Oost Brabant
	37 Midden Brabant
	38 Poldematuur Zeeland
	39 Natuurrijk Limburg
	40 Kroondomein het Loo
	41 Deltaplan Landschap (landelijk)



4. Wat zijn de voor- en nadelen van een groot of juist klein collectief?

Groot collectief:

Voordelen:

Nadelen:

Klein collectief:

Voordelen:

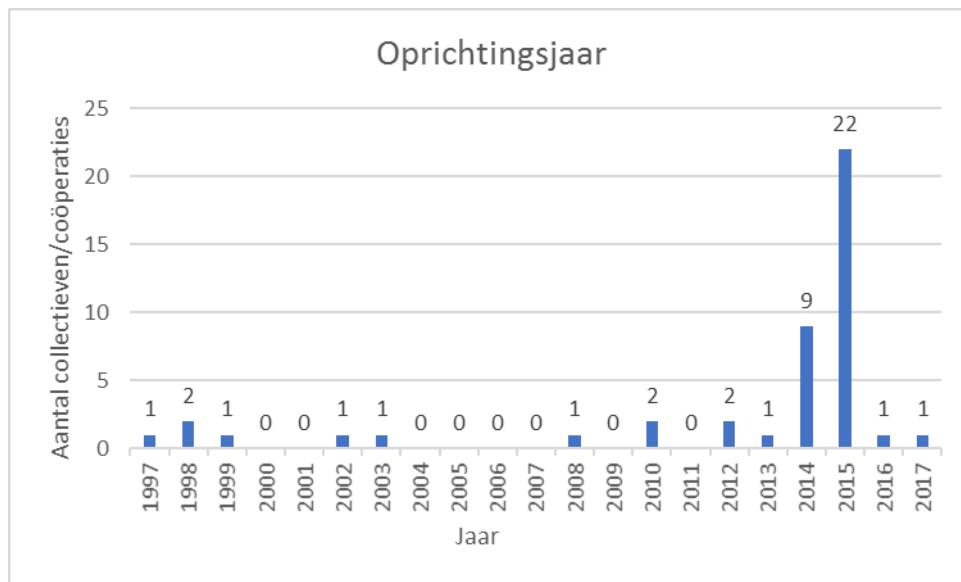
Nadelen:

Ontwikkelingen en trends

In mijn onderzoek heb ik gekeken naar actuele ontwikkelingen en trends die bepalend zijn voor de ontwikkeling van agrarische gebiedscoöperaties in Nederland. Hierbij is vooral gekeken naar ontwikkelingen die de activiteiten van agrarische gebiedscoöperaties beïnvloeden. Voorbeelden van ontwikkelingen zijn et nieuwe overheidsbeleid voor agrarisch natuurbeheer (de collectieve aanpak), het ontwikkelen van lokale implementatiemethoden voor (nieuwe) regelgeving, innovaties en subsidies op het gebied van duurzame energie, en invoeren van de (verplichte) kringloopwijzer.

5. Wat zijn, volgens u, actuele ontwikkelingen en/of trends die de activiteiten van agrarische gebiedscoöperaties beïnvloeden?

De volgende grafiek laat zien wanneer de huidige regionale organisaties (AGC's en agrarische collectieven) in Nederland gestart zijn.



Veel van de regionale organisaties zijn opgericht in de jaren 2014 en 2015 (69%).

6. Hebben AGC's en agrarische collectieven een vergelijkbaar takenpakket of zijn er veel onderlinge verschillen op het gebied van activiteiten?
7. Verschillen de regionale organisaties (AGC's en agrarische collectieven) veel qua organisatiestructuur?

Veel organisaties zijn opgericht vanwege de collectieve subsidieaanvragen. De overheid heeft besloten om meer verantwoordelijkheid te geven aan gemeenten en lokale partijen.

8. Kunnen Gebiedscoöperaties nog toetreden tot het SCAN collectief en de subsidieaanvragen regelen voor hun leden?

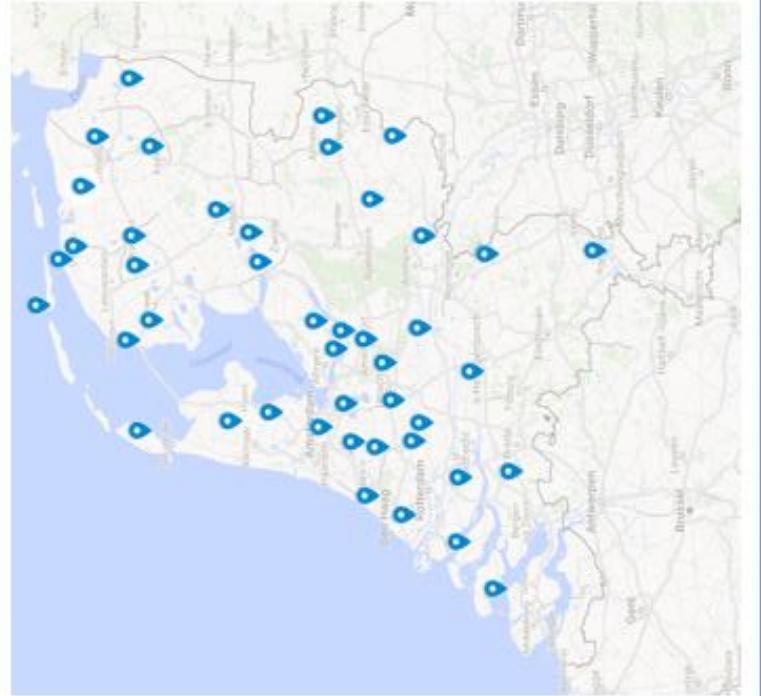
Voor natuur en landschapsbeheer in Nederland zijn zowel de EU als de nationale regelgeving bepalend.

9. In hoeverre zijn de subsidies voor agrarisch natuur beheer (weidevogels en akkerranden) en het invoeren van (nieuwe) reglementen belangrijk voor de activiteiten van een agrarische gebiedscoöperatie?

Ter afsluiting van mijn interview is er ruimte voor een dialoog over (de ontwikkeling van) agrarische gebiedscoöperaties in Nederland.

10. Verwacht u veranderingen in het pakket van activiteiten en taken van agrarische gebiedscoöperaties?

Appendix 5: Research overview

Definition of RC's	Locations of RC's	Activities of RC's
<p>Definition:</p> <p>"Environmental cooperatives are innovative associations of farmers based at local or regional level, which promote and organize activities related to sustainable agriculture and rural development in their locale. They also claim to be actively involved in the formulation and realization of adequate rural policies within their operational boundaries."</p>	<p>Regional cooperatives in the Netherlands</p>  <p>Main activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agricultural nature management activities; - Stimulating and implementing environmental measures; - Policy management and cooperation with other partners; - Research and knowledge building; - Facilitation of projects and differentiation activities of members; - Execution agricultural work. <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation/enhancement of environment - Promote sustainable agriculture - Wildlife protection - Regional development, nature and landscape management - Improve relationship farmer and citizen - Stimulate agri-tourism - Access to finance for activities <p>Developments & Trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature conservation policy - Newly founded/ Start-up phase - Collective approach - Responsibility shift - Biodiversity <p>Similar organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ANV (agricultural nature organization) - Environmental cooperative - Agricultural collective 	

Appendix 6: Summaries of the interviews

The summaries of the interviews are confidential and therefore not included in this document.