



Master thesis

NETWORKING IN REGIONAL LABOR MARKET POLICY

A study on the degree and quality of cooperation in a labor market region

J.V. Smeenk

FACULTY OF BEHAVIOURAL, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
MASTER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

EXAMINATION BOARD

Dr. P.J. Klok
Dr. G. Jansen



UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

PREFACE

With this thesis I will complete the Master degree program Public Safety of Public Administration at the University of Twente. In september 2016 I started an internship at Atlas Advies in Almelo. They focus on consulting organizations with regard to policy, subsidies and project management. Atlas Advies gave me the chance to get a good idea of what these subjects mean in practice. I got the opportunity to fulfil some supporting tasks next to my research. It was interesting to get an impression how projects get started, possibilities for funding are explored and to see how the projects are managed along the way. One of the organizations that has appointed Atlas Advies to consult in their projects is RPAhn. After some e-mail contact and a conversation in Alkmaar with Sharon Smit, chairwoman of RPAhn, the aim of the research became clear. This eventually lead to my research and this report.

First I would like to thank everyone at Atlas Advies. I had a pleasant time here during my internship, with nice colleagues and a pleasant environment. In particular, I would like to thank Louis and Maarten. Louis for giving me the opportunity for this internship and gain valuable experience. Maarten, as my external supervisor, for his help and assistance with my project and the fun times at the office. Second, my thanks go to my internal supervisors of the University of Twente, dr. Pieter-Jan Klok and dr. Giedo Jansen. Pieter-Jan has assisted me as my first supervisor, Giedo as my second supervisor. Both of them have helped me and provided me with feedback numerous times after which I was able to get back on the right track. Without all this help, the realization of this report would not have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Labor market policy in the Netherlands is regionally executed. The aim of the policy is to give everyone a chance to get a job and be self-supporting, so there is a strong focus on vulnerable societal groups. In order to regionally shape and execute labor market policy, the Netherlands is divided in 35 labor market regions and one of them is Noord-Holland Noord. To coordinate cooperation within the labor market region, a regional platform labor market policy was founded (RPAhn). Within this RPAhn network, different organizations cooperate to develop and execute projects for jobseekers, students and employees. However, it is not clear to what degree organizations in the network cooperate and how this cooperation is going. To study this, the following research question is formulated: *What is the degree and quality of cooperation within the labor market region Noord-Holland Noord, and how are these influenced by trust, goal consensus and resource dependency?*

First, there is made a description on network level. To answer this part of the research question, the research will focus on the degree and quality of cooperation in the network. Cooperation is determined by looking at which organizations are tied together through projects. This is possible on three different themes: From school to work, from work to work and from benefits to work. Cooperation on all three themes is defined as multiplex cooperation and says something about the intensity of the degree of cooperation. The quality of cooperation is determined by the commitment of organizations to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making. The research also tries to explain the degree and quality of cooperation by studying the relationship with trust, resource dependency and goal consensus between organizations.

The research is executed in the form of a case-study since it focuses on the particular case of the labor market region NHN and the RPAhn network. It is a quantitative research with a descriptive and an explanatory part. The organizations that participate in the RPAhn received an invitation to participate in a questionnaire. These are for a large part municipalities, but also educational organizations, employers' and employee organizations and other organizations. The respondents are representatives of the organizations that are involved in the RPAhn on behalf of their organization. Of the 28 member organizations, 22 have filled in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate with whom they cooperate and on which themes, after which they were asked about the independent variables.

The results show that the RPAhn network is reasonably well connected, with three or four organizations that have a central role in it. These have a large number of connections to others and thus a lot of cooperation. None of the organizations do not participate at all and there are no fragmented parts. The analysis of the quality of cooperation within the network shows that the organizations are committed to network goals. They are willing to invest time and resources for the network. Next to that, the professionalism of decision-making in the network is not as high as the commitment. A further analysis demonstrates that the organizations are satisfied with the clarity of agreements and the transparency of the decision-making process. However, organizations indicate that in general the compliance with agreements is not high. Also, the network is not able to act quickly and decisively. This is a limitation when facing new developments or problems. When looking at explanations for the degree of cooperation, the research shows that there is a relationship with trust in other organizations, resource dependency and goal consensus. The quality of cooperation is only related to symbiotic resource dependency between organizations.

Important findings of the research are that a coordinating organization regarding regional labor market policy matters and functions as a connector. As such a connector, a recommendation would be to explore the extra possibilities for cooperation with symbiotic dependency and communicate performances and results. Next to that, this study shows that both the strategic and structural approach, so goal consensus and resource dependency, play a role in network cooperation. Further research should give more clarity about how the compliance with agreements and the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively can be improved.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem

The Dutch government wants a participatory society in which citizens rely less on the government and more on their own strength. This starts with an income of their own. People with an income are not or less dependent on the government and are able to support themselves. This is of great importance from an economic perspective, but also from a social and health point of view. To get as many people as possible to work the Dutch government has introduced the Participatiewet in 2015 (Rijksoverheid, 2016). The basic idea of this law is that every person that is both psychically and mentally able has to take responsibility for his or her own life and environment. Within this law, labor market and labor market policy have a central role. The aim is to get as many people as possible, with or without occupational disability, to participate in the labor market.

In the Netherlands, labor market policy is regionally shaped and executed, whereby different parties cooperate with each other. To practically realize this, the Netherlands is divided in 35 labor market regions. From these labor market regions, the involved municipalities and the social security agency UWV provide services to jobseekers, employees and employers. In this way supply and demand of labor can be aligned regionally instead of locally which should allow for more efficient service provision. Important drivers here are economic and demographic developments (e.g. a shortage of skilled workers), educational changes, etc. The direct reason for the formation of these regions is the law Structuur Uitvoeringsorganisatie Werk en Inkomen (SUWI). Important provisions in this law include one contact point for employers per region, the use of one registration system for vacancies and jobseekers, and a labor market agenda with cooperation agreements for every labor market region. The customization of services plays an important role here. The main idea is that organizations are better able to connect education and labor market, match vacancies and jobseekers and attract new and preserve existing employment (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten, 2012). Municipalities play a significant role here. They are supposed to bring different organizations together, make agreements about cooperation and act as a director (Inspectie SZW, 2013). In doing so they can indicate and adapt the cooperation to what they think is important. So there are various forms of cooperation possible in a labor market region. However, an important starting point is bottom-up cooperation between municipalities and other organizations. Municipalities have the possibility to establish a Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid (RPA) which is a regional platform for labor market policy. This RPA can coordinate the cooperation (Inspectie SZW, 2013).

In 2014 the inspection of social affairs and employment, the Inspectie SZW, has evaluated the early stages of the cooperation based on the agreements that had been made between municipalities and other parties. Their conclusion was that there was a lot more to gain. There had been made few concrete agreements between the parties (Inspectie SZW, 2014). Next to that, there was a low degree of cooperation between public and private organizations. Another study shows that labor market regions can profit from a more business and result oriented cooperation (Boogers, Klok, Denters, & Sanders, 2016). In this way organizations are better able to realize regional and local policy results. However, far from everything is known about the functioning of these cooperative partnerships. There is for example little knowledge about what characteristics of the involved parties influence the cooperation and its outcomes. It may be well worth it to study these regional cooperations regarding labor market policy.

1.2 Relevance

The municipality of Alkmaar is designated as the central municipality of the labor market region Noord-Holland Noord (NHN). The central municipality has a directing role in the area of labor market policy and is responsible for the execution and implementation of the programs, funding, administration, etc. The actual coordination of the cooperation in the labor market region NHN is being done by the foundation Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid Noord-Holland Noord (RPA_{NHN}). This foundation is established to coordinate and steer the cooperation into the right direction. The RPA_{NHN} organizes and coordinates various activities and projects in order to solve regional labor market issues. The focus is on achieving a sustainable labor market. The goals are set in accordance with the

Participatiewet. Important here are the ever changing demand of employers and an improvement of the educational level. Also, the aim is to have a more flexible, strategic and transparent deployment of employees by employers. To realize all this, there has to be a great commitment of employers and employees, as well as support of public organizations.

Within the RPAhn there is a steering committee in which municipalities, the UWV, educational institutions, employers' organizations and employee organizations are united. This steering committee, which is mandated, takes joint decisions around the execution of the labor market agenda (Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid NHN, 2014). Members of the steering committee utilize their organizations and resources to achieve the planned objectives. They also act as an ambassador for regional agreements. The regional labor market agenda is funded through multiple resources. There is money from municipalities, but there is also project funding for several activities. The cooperation between the parties mainly takes place based on co-financing.

The labor market region NHN can be divided into three sub-regions: Alkmaar, Kop van Noord-Holland and West-Friesland. The existing infrastructure will be taken into account with the implementation of labor market policy. Also, existing consulting structure regarding economy, education, social affairs and labor market will be used (Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid NHN, 2014). Important terms for cooperation between parties within the labor market region are equivalence, proportional contribution and effort, transparency regarding the implementation, the sharing of results and success, joint external action and joint responsibility for the results.

The RPAhn is tied to the labor market region as network organization. This organization focuses mainly on the realization of regional labor agenda using the program 'Samen Sterk voor Werk'. This labor market program focuses on goals within three main themes: 'From school to work' (School-Work), 'From work to work' (Work-Work) and 'From benefits to work' (Benefits-Work) (Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid NHN, 2014). This program covers the period 2015-2018. The theme School-Work concerns the realization of a smooth transition between education and labor market, especially for vulnerable youngsters with no diploma. The aim is to provide guidance to vulnerable students regarding their search for a job. Jeugd Werkt! (Youth Works!) is one of the main projects created to realize goals within this theme. Through this project, youngsters are able to find a job, an apprenticeship or a work experience position. The theme Work-Work focuses on sectoral and intersectoral mobility of employees. Investment in education and training, and sustainable employability are very important regarding future developments. They enable current employees to keep working and develop themselves. To realize this, Huis van het Werk (Home of Work) is designed by the RPAhn. This project concerns a mobility network of employers in the region. These employers can meet each other, exchange information about supply and demand regarding the labor market and employees, and discuss additional services. The third theme, Benefits-Work, concerns vulnerable groups of people without a job. One of the main aims is to get as many of the people within these groups a job. To do this, public organizations have to provide quality service to employers. It is established by law that every labor market region has to arrange a regional work company. This is also the case within the labor market region NHN. Within the regional work company, several organizations like municipalities, the UWV and others participate. These organizations make appointments about a unified approach to employers, a uniform set of instruments and transparency of labor market supply and demand. Next to projects and initiatives within these themes, the labor market region also participates in other types of activities. The labor market region aims at a unified approach and optimal utilization of (European) subsidies and organizes meetings to inform stakeholders about recent developments regarding the regional labor market.

So within the RPAhn, they are currently working to realize the labor market agenda Samen Sterk voor Werk 2015-2018. To commit organizations to certain agreements, most of the important stakeholders have signed a covenant (Regionaal Platform Arbeidsmarktbeleid NHN, 2014). The help of all these stakeholders is needed to make the labor market agenda into a success. Meanwhile, two of these four years have passed. The cooperation within the RPAhn is up and running and there is a need for more knowledge regarding the course of this cooperation. Research into the cooperation between organizations in the labor market region NHN can provide insight about this specific collaboration in this region, but also in how labor market policy in the Netherlands is shaped and

executed. By looking at the degree of cooperation within the labor market region NHN possible improvements can be made and lessons can be learned, also for other regions in the Netherlands.

1.3 Research question

Research into the cooperation between organizations regarding regional labor market policy can provide important new insights. By mapping which organizations cooperate with whom and how, points of improvement can be identified. Also, it can give more clarity about the role of different organizations in the network. These insights will enable us to give a better direction to cooperation regarding regional labor market policy in the future. Eventually this may lead to the production of more services and more people finding a job. The survival of the network or cooperation between organizations is an important subject. To investigate all this the following research question is formulated:

What is the degree and quality of cooperation within the labor market region Noord-Holland Noord, and how are these influenced by trust, goal consensus and resource dependency?

So this research tries to clarify the degree of cooperation within the labor market region NHN, along with the quality of the cooperation. The next chapter will further elaborate on the definitions of these concepts. This research also tries to explain the degree and quality of cooperation. Several aspects of organizations and their interactions will be taken into account. To do this the research will focus on the influence of trust, goal consensus and resource dependency on the degree and quality of cooperation. In line with this, the following sub-questions are formulated:

- *What is the degree and quality of cooperation between organizations within the labor market region NHN?*
- *What is the influence of trust on the degree and quality of cooperation?*
- *What is the influence of resource dependency on the degree and quality of cooperation?*
- *What is the influence of goal consensus on the degree and quality of cooperation?*

2. THEORY

2.1 Policy networks

One definition of policy is all intentions, choices and actions of one or more administrative bodies aimed at controlling a certain social development (Bovens, Hart, & Twist, 2007). Policy is designed depending on which direction the government wants to steer such a development. It is an ongoing process and is continually reassessed based on experience and the redefining of problems. The formation and execution of policy can be coordinated in several ways. Van Heffen en Klok (2000) differentiate between three mechanisms of coordination: a market, a hierarchy and a network. A network distinguishes itself from a market and hierarchy in several ways, but combines elements of both mechanisms. A market is characterized by horizontal organization in which supply and demand determine interactions between organizations. In this system, policy is shaped and executed through competition, formal contracts and value for money. This system is multicentric. A hierarchical system is organized vertically and this system is unicentric and top-down. One party does what the other party instructs it to do. Rules and laws from above determine in what way policy is shaped and executed, which parties play what kind of role, etc. A network as mechanism of coordination is characterized by autonomous actors who have relatively durable and informal relationships with each other. This durability allows actors to interact informally with each other, based on a certain level of trust (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004). Within a network negotiation and consensus are the basis for decision-making and coordinated action. Public and private actors cooperate in this, and the government has a more supportive and coordinating role. There is a mix of self- and common interest, whereby actors help one another but also expect something in return. All parties cooperate together in order to eventually realize a mutual benefit. The purpose is to create win-win situation. The contribution of different resources by different organizations is of great importance here.

Eventually the realization of mutual benefit by complementing each other creates a basis for structural relationships between organizations. In that case there is *resource dependency*: organizations depend on each other's resources to perform their activities and reach their goals (Kersbergen & Waarden, 2004; Marsh & Smith, 2000). Within a network of actors that cooperate to realize policy, all these actors are dependent on each other's efforts and actions. Every actor has a limited number of resources and its own specific contribution. The term resources is used to describe everything that is needed to perform a certain activity. By pooling these resources, a network can perform activities that would not have been possible otherwise. This is also the case for the labor market region NHN. Municipalities for example, can be dependent on participation of educational institutions regarding the guidance of youngsters from school towards a job. Educational institutions on the other hand depend on municipalities regarding financial support and coordination. The same principle goes for the relationship between municipalities, employers' organizations, employee organizations, etc.

2.2 Organizations within the network

The study focuses on clarifying and explaining the degree and quality of cooperation between organizations within the labor market region NHN. To do this, it is important to gain insight in the characteristics of actors and their behavior. The choices actors make and the actions they take depend on a number of things. There are two theoretical approaches to interpret actions of actors: the structural approach and the strategic approach (Marsh & Smith, 2000; Rhodes, 2006). The structural approach focuses on the structure of interdependency between organizations in a network. This is also called resource dependency (Marsh & Smith, 2000). Because actors depend on each other in order to realize policy goals, they are forced to cooperate. This approach views a network as an object with a solid structure and individual actors are parts of this structure. Within this structure, every actor has its own resources. These can for example be capital, goods, expertise, information or legal rights. Depending on the set of legal resources, actors have to cooperate with certain other actors to complement each other and reach their (network) goals. Ostrom, Gardner and Walker (1994) use a number of features that enable to map characteristics of actors. This is important since these characteristics can eventually be factors that influence the cooperation between actors. Ostrom,

Gardner and Walker also distinguish the set of resources an actor owns as an important characteristic. These resources include: capital, goods, expertise, information and legal rights. Every actor has its own resources. These resources can contribute to reaching the goals of the organization and the network. Whether it is necessary for an organization to cooperate with another organization depends on the specific set of resources. The central idea behind the concept of networking is founded on the need for actors to complement each other's resources in order to achieve certain goals or to meet the demand of their target audience.

The strategic approach focuses on the individual preferences of actors for certain actions or outcomes (Ostrom, Gardner, & Walker, 1994). This is strongly related to the individual goals of actors. The main question here is why a certain actor would participate in a network. Organizations ask themselves what they gain by participating in a network. The strategic approach explains actor behavior in a network as a rational or strategic choice (Hay & Richards, 2000). The preferences for goals can vary from actor to actor. A network has network goals, but every actor in this network also has its own objectives. Within a network it is important that these individual goals of actors are not too far apart. In such a case there is no basis for cooperation (Hay & Richards, 2000). Actors make strategic considerations and choices, and they decide themselves whether they participate in a network or not (and how). In doing this, they keep in mind their own individual goals. So actors can choose between several alternative actions. Marsh and Smith (2000) state in their research that both the structural and the strategic approach are influential. Organizations decide based on the knowledge and resources they have, but in some cases they are pushed towards cooperation, simply because they need others to deliver certain services. Meanwhile, the process of reassessing network cooperation continues. Organizations continually monitor costs and benefits of network participation.

2.3 Degree of cooperation within the network

This study examines to what degree organizations within the labor market region NHN cooperate with each other and what the quality of this cooperation is. To get a good impression of this cooperation it is important to look at several different aspects. Provan, Veazie, Staten and Teufel-Shone (2005) have defined several relevant concepts regarding network cooperation and the connectedness between organizations. To get a clear image of the degree of cooperation they focus on relationships between actors. One important concept is a dyad or a tie, which is a connection between two organizations in some way. This concept concerns a relation in its most simple form and it means that one organization indicates that it cooperates with another. Within the labor market region this means that an organization indicates to cooperate with another organization regarding the decision-making and/or execution of activities on one of the main themes. However, this concept does not focus on the content of the relationship or interaction. When such a relationship is confirmed by the second organization, so two organizations that acknowledge one another, there is a reciprocal relationship. Such a relationship can be characterized as stronger than the one-sided relationship. Actors that acknowledge each other as a cooperative partner see better opportunities for (further) cooperation. So it is important to get clear which organizations cooperate. Centrality is another concept that plays a role here (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005). Organizations with a large number of relationships are more central in the network than organizations with a small number of relationships. Centrality concerns the number of relationships that an organization has relative to other organizations. Another meaningful concept regarding the degree of cooperation that is mentioned by Provan et al. (2005) is the density. This density of a network concerns the interconnectedness of organizations. The actual number of ties between organizations is compared to the possible number of ties. Density says something about the network as a whole. More relationships between organizations means a denser network, which means a higher level of activity and cooperation in the network. A network that is very dense, is very strongly connected, allowing it to produce more and better services. Next to that there will be a high degree of knowledge and information transfer which allows organizations to learn from each other and utilize each other's capabilities.

Another aspect of a network that is mentioned in this light is fragmentation (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005). Fragmentation means that certain parts of the network are not or only minimally connected with each other. Just like density, fragmentation is a characteristic of the network as a whole. Fragmented parts of a network can have their own system and have little regard for the rest of the network. It is kind of a separate island within the network. Cooperation within a network in which there are fragmented parts may possibly function less well since not all actors connected. Fragmentation within a network could indicate a low degree and weak structure of cooperation. On the other hand, it is also possible that there are positive sides to fragmentation. Fragmented parts may operate quick and efficient through their own system. Related to fragmentation (and its possible positive side) is a clique or cluster. This is a sub-group of at least three organizations who are fully connected with each other. So there is a very strong interconnectedness between the organizations involved. A cluster implies that there is a high degree and strong structure of cooperation. Fragmentation of clusters can appear around actors that are geographically close to each other.

A last important concept regarding the degree of cooperation that is distinguished by Provan et al. (2005) is multiplexity. Multiplexity concerns the number of different ways in which organizations are tied together. So it says something about the intensity of the relationship between two organizations, which makes it a characteristic of a relationship. Organizations within the labor market region can cooperate with each other within three different themes. This means cooperation within the theme School-Work, the theme Work-Work or the theme Benefits-Work. These themes concern projects and initiatives focused on vulnerable youth and students, vulnerable unemployed and employees with a job but who have better chances in a different position or sector. Cooperation between organizations on multiple themes determines the presence of a multiplex relationship. Multiplexity means that organizations cooperation in multiple ways and on multiple levels, making their relationship stronger. Eventually this will lead to a better functioning of this cooperation. Organizations know each other's strengths and weaknesses, and can interact informally.

2.4 Quality of cooperation within the network

Next to the degree of cooperation, this research also focuses on the quality of cooperation between organizations. To determine whether and how cooperation between actors in a network runs smoothly and is of good quality, it is important to decide which aspects should be considered. The method or mode of cooperating in a network can be evaluated in different ways. It is important to determine at what level to evaluate this way of cooperation. Provan and Milward (2001) did research into the effectiveness of networks and they make a distinction between three levels of measurement: community, network and organizational level. Each level has its own stakeholders, with their own specific set of criteria. Effectiveness at community level focuses on legitimacy and external support. The opinion of the community is crucial here. Next to that, it is important what the network provides for its clients. So this level of measurement strongly focuses on the outcome of a policy network. It also looks for a large part at the costs of the services that the network offers. Stakeholders at this level can be divided in two groups: principals and agents. Principals are the so called customers giving the 'order' and clients are the receivers of the networks services. The quality of cooperation in a network can also be determined at organizational level. Organizations who participate in a network eventually want to benefit from this. They do not let their own goals get out of sight, which fits the strategic approach. Thus, cooperation of good quality at organizational level is about the revenues or benefits received from the cooperation for the own organization. The most important criterion for individual organizations is the fact whether they can survive by participating in the network or not (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005).

The level that is most relevant to measure the quality of cooperation within the labor market region NHN is the network level, which is focused on cooperation as a process. It mainly focuses on the viability of the network as a whole and it is crucial in determining the quality of cooperation in this. The question about quality is predominantly aimed at the process, which is thought to be most relevant for the RPAhn network. The basic starting point is to get the quality of cooperation between organizations within the network clear. Two criteria are distinguished at this level of measurement.

First of all, the commitment of actors to network goals play an important role (Provan & Milward, 2001). This commitment of actors determines for an important part if a cooperation functions well. Organizations are strongly engaged in the cooperation and involved in the network. They are willing to do something for the network and are willing to put time and effort in it. When actors are fully committed to network goals, they are willing to put effort in and this is beneficial for the provided services. This in turn, provides a viable network. A high commitment of organizations for network goals means a high quality of cooperation within the labor market region NHN. Next to that, as they are committed, they want to think along with other members and the network as a whole, and they develop new and fresh ideas. Within the labor market region NHN this means for example that one is capable of producing services for new groups like recent immigrants. Important from the strategic approach to network participation, is the idea that an organization is able to make certain choices regarding the participation to a network (Rhodes, 2006). If the degree to which an organization feels part of the network is high, this organization wants everything to go well for the network and will act according to this wish. The choices one makes will be aimed at keeping the network viable. In short: a high commitment of organizations to network goals means a high quality of cooperation.

Next to the theory of Provan and Milward (2001) about quality of cooperation in a network, there is another important concept: professionalism of decision-making (Boogers, Klok, Denters, & Sanders, 2016). The professionalism of decision-making is part of the cooperative culture that prevails in a network and focuses on the quality of cooperation. Professionalism implies formality and cooperation based on contract, but that is not all that is meant with this definition. For clarification, one can also see professionalism of decision-making as quality of decision-making. A high quality or professionalism of decision-making means among others that agreements are respected. This is one aspect of professionalism of decision-making: compliance with agreements. Another aspect focuses on the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively. When the network can respond quickly to new developments or problems, it is able to produce better services and more efficient projects. A third aspect is transparency and clarity of the agreements and decisions made. When the professionalism of decision-making is high, organizations within the labor market region make clear agreements in a transparent way, comply to these and decide quickly based on equality and act decisively. In that case there is high-quality cooperation. Organizations within the network can rely on each other, communicate clearly and know their place in the network. When these processes go well, this leads to good network results.

2.5 Trust

Besides individual organizations in the network who have been discussed shortly in paragraph 2.2, it is important to go one step further and look at the interactions or relationships between these organizations. To get a clear image of how a network is constructed, it is of importance to map these interactions. Through these interactions, relationships between actors emerge. These relationships between actors are crucial for the way they cooperate with each other. Several aspects play a role here and some of them will be mentioned in light of this research. A first important aspect of how organizations relate to each other is trust. With trust is meant: the willingness of an actor to put itself in a vulnerable position based on the positive expectations about the intention or behavior of the other actor (Kenis & Provan, 2009). So an organization is prepared to do something in the interest of others, because they expect to benefit from this in the long-term. Trust says something about the relationship that two actors have, but it is a characteristic of a specific actor. Two actors can have a relationship, but have different levels of trust in one another. The expectation is that the level of trust says something about the potential of cooperation, and its success. Trust is seen as a condition for entering in a cooperation. When the relationship is only based on formal agreements, contracts and rules, there is less time and space for organizations to cooperate. The first expectation regarding this research follows from this which is measured at organizational level:

H_{1a}: An organization with a high degree of trust in others cooperates with more other organizations than an organization with a low degree of trust in others.

Basically this states that as organizations have more positive expectations of others, they are also more willing to engage in shared activities and projects with multiple others, because they think they will eventually gain something by doing this.

Besides whether or not there is cooperation between organizations, it is interesting to focus on the themes on which organizations within the labor market region cooperate. Multiplexity plays a role here in this refers to the intensity of cooperation between organizations. Within the labor market region there is multiplex cooperation when organizations indicate to cooperate with others on all three main themes of the RPAhn network. That would for example mean that two municipalities cooperate to support students in finding a job, but also support jobseekers and employees in finding a job or getting relocated. The next hypothesis regarding trust and multiplex cooperation is tested on organizational level:

H_{1b}: An organization with a high degree of trust in others, cooperates multiplex with more other organizations than an organization with a low degree of trust in others.

In case there is personal contact and informality between organizations, over time the cooperation between organizations will run more smoothly and efficient. Boogers, Klok, Denters and Sanders (2016) mention in their research on regional cooperation trust as the basis of a good cooperation. Trust influences the quality of cooperation. Organizations that trust each other should be better able to make decisions. In a policy network there are, different from a market of hierarchical system, no or less contracts or top-down rules which makes the aspect of relationships crucial for cooperation. As the level of trust between organizations grows or an organization has more trust in others, the degree and quality of cooperation will increase. They are willing to put themselves in a vulnerable position because they have positive expectations of others. When this trust is redeemed, the cooperative relationships will only get stronger. There are two expectations regarding the relationship between trust and quality of cooperation. The first one is that trust of an organization in another one leads to a higher commitment to the network. An organization has positive expectations of others which ensures dedication and commitment to the cooperation and the network. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_{1c}: An organization with a high degree of trust in other organizations has a higher commitment to network goals than an organization with a low degree of trust in other organizations.

Eventually this hypothesis enables to say something about the network as a whole. This involves the total sum of values for commitment of organizations within the network. When there is a high degree of trust between organizations the commitment within the network is also thought to be high.

Last, the professionalism of decision-making may be affected by the degree of trust between organizations. The professionalism of decision-making is an assessment of organizations about several aspects of the cooperative process. This concerns clear agreements, transparent decision-making, etc. The assumption is that as the degree of trust is higher, the professionalism of decision-making will also be assessed higher by member organizations. The following hypothesis is formulated regarding this relationship:

H_{1d}: An organization with a high degree of trust in other organizations assesses the professionalism and quality of decision-making as higher than an organization with a low degree of trust in other organizations.

2.6 Resource dependency

Earlier the concept resource dependency was mentioned, which involves the idea that organizations in a network depend on each other regarding resources. The basis of this idea is the structural approach to the behavior of organizations and network theory (Rhodes, 2006). Having and

needing different resources creates dependency relationships between actors in the network. One actor holds financial capital but needs certain knowledge, while the other actor holds specific knowledge but needs financial capital to provide certain services. So organizations can complement each other. However, that does not apply to all cases. Important regarding resource dependency is not only what an organization has to offer, but also what this organization requires (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Research of Fenger and Klok (2001) shows that dependency relationships between actors can differ. They make a distinction between three types of dependency relationships: symbiotic, independent and competitive. So this distinction helps to explain how actors relate to each other in terms of resources. The example that was mentioned before about financial capital and knowledge concerns a symbiotic dependency relationship: actors complement each others' resources. Symbiotic dependency positively influences the degree and quality of cooperation. The expectation is that if there is a high number of symbiotic relationships within a labor market region, there is a wide range of provided services that are of high-quality. Organizations that are complementary will also be more committed to the networks goals and will more likely cooperate with one another. They need each other to provide certain services. From this, hypothesis H_{2a} follows:

H_{2a}: Organizations with symbiotic dependency cooperate more often with each other than organizations with no symbiotic dependency.

Next to the fact whether organizations cooperate or not, the intensity of cooperation also plays a role. So this focuses on multiplexity of cooperation. The expectation is that symbiotic dependency between organizations leads to cooperation that is more intensive, so on all three labor market themes. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{2b}: Organizations with symbiotic dependency cooperate more often in a multiplex way with each other than organizations with no symbiotic dependency.

When organizations are complementary regarding resources, this will also lead to a better quality of cooperation. It is assumed that symbiotic dependency has a positive influence on the commitment organizations. The hypothesis H_{2c} that is formulated below, concerns the relationship between symbiotic dependency and commitment of organizations to network goals. This hypothesis is formulated on organizational level since commitment to network goals is a characteristic of a single organization. It is expected that when an organization is symbiotically dependent with many other organizations, they are very committed to network goals because a certain motivation derives from the fact that one can achieve certain goals together that are otherwise unattainable. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_{2c}: An organization with many symbiotic dependency relationships has a higher commitment to network goals than an organizations with few symbiotic dependency relationships.

The last expectation regarding resource dependency that will be studied focuses on its presumed relationship with professionalism of decision-making. Due to the fact that organizations are not or less bothered by each others' competitive resources, the decision-making process will go more easy. Organizations need each other and therefore clear agreements and transparent decision-making is necessary. The fourth hypothesis regarding resource dependency is:

H_{2d}: An organization with many symbiotic dependency relationships assesses the professionalism of decision-making as higher than an organization with few symbiotic dependency relationships.

2.7 Goal consensus

Above, goals are already mentioned as characteristics of actors. From the strategic approach to network theory, individual goals of organizations are leading when considering to participate in a

network or not (Rhodes, 2006). It is also important to bear in mind the relationship between the different individual goals of organizations in a network. Research has shown that the individual goals of network actors should not be too far apart because in such a case there is no shared basis for cooperation (Hay & Richards, 2000). So it is important get a good idea of the degree of goal consensus between organizations in a network. As well as with resource dependency, Fenger and Klok (2001) also have an operable distinction for goal consensus relationships between organizations. Goals of actors can be congruent, indifferent or divergent. Congruence with regard to the goals means organizations pursue more or less the same goals. As the goals of actors are more congruent, so are in line with each other, there will be more coalition behavior and a greater chance of a high degree of cooperation within a network. Organizations want to achieve the same outcome. The idea is that having goal consensus or not, says something about the potential of cooperation between organizations. That is to say that when organizations have the same aspiration, they would want to achieve this together rather than organizations that do not have the same aspiration. The hypothesis regarding this relationship is:

H_{3a}: An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others, will cooperate with more other organizations than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others.

When organizations have similar goals, this may also influence the intensity of the cooperation between them. The assumption is that goal consensus positively influences the chance of multiplex cooperation between organizations. Organizations within the labor market region that pursue the same goal will cooperate on several themes. Based on this the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_{3b}: An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others, will have multiplex cooperation with more other organizations than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others.

Next to the degree of cooperation, goal consensus also has a presumed relationship with the quality of cooperation within a network. The assumption is that organizations are better able to make professional decisions and are more committed to network goals when they pursue the same goals as others. When an organization has a high level of goal consensus with others, there will be less doubt about the motives or commitment of others, which will positively influence its own commitment to network goals. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{3c}: An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others, has a higher commitment to network goals than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others.

The last hypothesis regarding goal consensus concerns the relationship with professionalism of decision-making. As said, the assumption is that organizations that pursue the same goals will be better able to comply with agreements, decide quickly together and be open and transparent towards each other. The fourth hypothesis is:

H_{3d}: An organization that has a high level of goal consensus with others, assesses the professionalism of decision-making as higher than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research design

This study looks at a specific case, namely the labor market region NHN. With this research, the degree and quality of cooperation within the labor market region will be studied. First the RPAnhn network will be described at network level. Second, explanatory factors are tested on organizational and relationship level. In paragraph 3.3 there is information about how these variables are measured. So next to the description of the degree and quality of cooperation, the research also tries to explain these by looking at trust, resource dependency and goal consensus. This makes the research twofold. To clarify these matters, the research will be executed as a case-study which will specifically focus at organizations within the labor market region NHN (Yin, 2002). The presumed influence of trust on the degree and quality of cooperation is measured by looking at organizations. The same goes for the influence of goal consensus on the degree and quality of cooperation. Some of the expectations regarding resource dependency and the quality of cooperation are measured on relationship level, since in these cases this is thought to be most relevant. This goes for hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b}. The research also looks at differences at network level. The networks concerning the three different themes within the labor market region NHN are therefore examined: from school to work (School-Work), from work to work (Work-Work) and from benefits to work (Benefits-Work). By comparing these three networks with each other, differences in the degree and quality of cooperation can be determined. For the degree of cooperation this means among others that something can be said about the density of the networks. An important characteristic of a case-study is that empirical data is collected within the actual context. Based on the observations of specific characteristics of network members and their relationships, conclusions are drawn about whether there is cooperation and how this takes place. Depending on the level of measurement of hypotheses there are different units of analysis and observation. The labor market region as policy network is the unit of analysis on network level. To say something about the network, the research focuses on individual organizations that are involved in the network. These organizations are the units of observation (Babbie E. , 2010). In the case of the hypotheses on relationship level, the relationships between organizations are the units of analysis. Again, the organizations are the units of observation. When one looks at the hypotheses at organizational level, then the individual organizations are both the units of analysis as the units of observation. One limitation of the case-study is that there is only a limited degree of generalization possible (Babbie E. , 2010). Precisely because one focuses at a specific case with such specific conditions it is not easy to link these conclusions to other situations.

The degree of cooperation is determined by two of the four dependent variables in the research: whether or not there is cooperation and multiplexity of cooperation. The quality of cooperation within the RPAnhn network is determined by the other two dependent variables: commitment of organizations to network goals and professionalism of decision-making. The independent variables of which the influence on the dependent variables is determined are trust in other organizations, goal consensus with others and resource dependency between organizations. The relationship between trust, goal consensus and resource dependency, and the degree and quality of cooperation will be tested. To do this, quantitative data is used which will be gathered using a questionnaire. More about data collection in the next paragraph.

3.2 Data collection

It is essential to get a clear picture of the actors that are involved and to clearly define this. Various organizations have been selected to participate in this research. To determine which organizations should participate, the covenant 'Samen Sterk voor Werk', which is signed by different organizations in the labor market region NHN, is used. Next to RPAnhn which is involved in the network as coordinating organization, there are 17 municipalities from Noord-Holland that are involved in the network. It should be noted here that the network as a whole is called RPAnhn, but also the RPAnhn is an organization that acts as the coordinator of the network. The municipalities are divided in three sub-regions. These are the sub-regions Alkmaar, West-Friesland and Kop van Noord-Holland.

Besides the municipalities, the UWV Noord-Holland Noord is included in the research. There are also educational organizations that participate in the network and thus the research. These organizations include secondary vocational education and higher education. ROC Horizon College is for the sake of this research included in the sub-regions Alkmaar and West-Friesland and ROC Kop van Noord-Holland belongs to sub-region Kop van NH. Also employers and employees are represented in the network through several organizations. A last organization that is selected for the research is the Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Noord-Holland Noord. This organization is working to make NHN an economically strong region. They support for example employers in this specific region, but also try to put the region on the map using marketing. Table 1 shows an overview of the organizations.

Table 1. Overview of organizations that participate in the RPAhn network

Type of organizations	Organizations
Municipalities: sub-region Alkmaar	Alkmaar, Heerhugowaard, Langedijk, Bergen, Castricum, Heiloo
Municipalities: sub-region West-Friesland	Hoorn, Drechterland, Enkhuizen, Koggenland, Opmeer, Medemblik, Stede Broec
Municipalities: sub-region Kop van Noord-Holland	Den Helder, Hollands Kroon, Schagen, Texel
Educational organizations	Hogeschool Inholland, Clusius College, ROC Horizon College (sub-region Alkmaar and West-Friesland), ROC Kop van Noord-Holland (sub-region Kop van NH)
Employers' organizations	MKB-Nederland NHN, VNO-NCW west
Employee organizations	FNV, CNV, VCP
Other organizations	RPAhn, UWV, Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Noord-Holland Noord

As said, the questionnaire is distributed among organizations within the labor market region NHN that have signed the covenant. In practice this means that one representative of every organizations is invited to participate in the research. Most of these representatives have signed the covenant on behalf of their organization and thus are involved in the cooperation. In total there are 29 organizations that participate within the RPAhn. All these organizations have been sent a questionnaire and asked to cooperate in this research. Of these 29 organizations, 18 organizations have completely filled in this questionnaire and 4 of them have partially completed the questionnaire. The following organizations have not filled in the questionnaire: Heerhugowaard, Heiloo, Drechterland, Enkhuizen, Koggenland, MKB-Nederland NHN and Ontwikkelingsbedrijf Noord-Holland Noord. The municipality of Alkmaar has partially filled in the questionnaire, but did not indicate with which organizations they cooperate.

3.3 Operationalization

To get clear what the degree and quality of cooperation within the labor market region NHN looks like and how these relate to trust, resource dependency and goal consensus, it is important to make all variables measurable. The development of specific research procedures enables to change the aforementioned abstract theoretical concepts into concrete measurable observations (Babbie E. , 2010). It is important here to look at the possible variation of every concept, but also the level of measurement.

The first dependent variable that will be measured is the degree of cooperation within the network. Multiplexity of cooperation is also taken into account. Important is how intensive the cooperation is. The degree of cooperation between organizations in the RPAhn network is determined by asking every organization with what other organizations they cooperate. Cooperation between organizations is defined as working together regarding decision-making and/or execution of projects concerning RPAhn. This cooperation can refer to three main themes: School-Work, Work-Work and Benefits-Work. Respondents get a list of all other organizations and indicate with what other organizations they cooperate and on which themes. In this way all cooperative relationships can be determined between all participating organizations. The question posed here is: "With which

organizations does your own organization cooperate regarding the decision-making and/or execution of projects or initiatives in the context of RPAhn? Indicate to what theme(s) this cooperation refers to. Leave empty if there is no cooperation". Based on this the degree of cooperation can be determined, including the number of multiplex relationships. Eventually, statements can be made about the whole network, in which the density and fragmentation are mapped.

The quality of cooperation within the network is determined by looking at the commitment of actors to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making (Boogers, Klok, Denters, & Sanders, 2016; Provan & Milward, 2001). The commitment of organizations to network goals is about the time and energy they want to put into the network and the degree to which they feel involved in the network. The commitment of organizations is measured using two items, again taking in mind the three different themes. Two statements are used. The first statement that is being presented to the respondents is: "My organization makes a relative large amount of time and resources available to realize RPAhn goals concerning the theme 'School/Work/Benefits-Work'". The second statement that is used is: "My organization does everything in its power to realize RPAhn goals concerning the theme 'School/Work/Benefits-Work'". The scores on these statements indicate to what extent organizations are committed to network goals. This is measured based on a five point Likert scale with 1= 'Completely disagree' and 5= 'Completely agree'. The professionalism of decision-making is measured using three items. Also here, a distinction is made between the three themes. Respondents answer the questions regarding the professionalism of decision-making for each of the themes. This depends on the themes that they cooperate. This enables to determine differences within the network. The first item refers to the compliance of organizations with agreements in the network and this is measured with the following question: "To what extent do organizations comply with agreements within the RPAhn network concerning the theme 'School/Work/Benefits-Work'?" The second item refers to the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively. The question that is used to measure this is: "To what extent is there quick and decisive action within the RPAhn network concerning the theme 'School/Work/Benefits-Work'?" The third item is about the transparency of decision-making and this is measured using the following question: "To what extent is there transparency of decision-making in the RPAhn network concerning the 'School/Work/Benefits-Work'?" The possible answers are again based on a five point Likert scale. The score 1 represents 'To a very small extent' and 5 represents 'To a very large extent'.

To determine the presumed relationship of trust and the degree and quality of cooperation, it is important to measure trust as a variable. Trust concerns a characteristic of an organization that refers to a relationship with another organization. Important here is the extent to which there is trust in others. The respondents are asked to indicate this for each of the other organizations that have signed the covenant. The following question is posed: "To what extent is there trust from within your own organization in the other organizations? Indicate this for each of the following organizations". Again, a five point Likert scale is used. Eventually the scores for this question enable to say something about the trust at organizational level, but also at network level.

Another independent variable that is measured in the context of this research is resource dependency. Resource dependency is a characteristic of a relationship between organizations. To determine the resource dependency between organizations, the following question is posed: "Which organizations have resources that your own organization does not have or only to a small extent, and that can help your organization in realizing goals regarding the RPAhn network? Indicate what resources it refers to (multiple answers possible)". So respondents are able to choose different resources. These resources are: financial resources, (potential) work force, jobs, specific knowledge/expertise or legal power. Based on the answers of the respondents it can be determined which organizations complement each other and to which resources this refers. So there is a symbiotic relationship when both organizations indicate that they can use each others' resources.

The last independent variable is goal consensus between organizations. This is derived from the strategic approach to networking which states that organizations choose to cooperate based on similar goals (Rhodes, 2006). Again this is a characteristic of a relationship between organizations. Just like with resource dependency, respondents are asked to indicate for each of the other organizations whether they think if there is a match between their goals. The following question is

used to measure this: "To what extent do the goals of the following organizations match those of your own organization? Indicate this for each of the organizations". The possible answer are based on a five point Likert scale and vary from 1= 'To a very small extent' to 5= 'To a very large extent'.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the collected data will be analyzed in order to be able to formulate answers to the different sub-questions. The first sub-question focuses on the degree and quality of cooperation between organizations within the RPAhn network. To answer this, the network will be described by looking at these two aspects. This first sub-question is answered by looking at the data on network level. The other sub-questions are explanatory questions which focus on a causal relationship. These questions will be answered by analyzing the collected data on organizational and relationship level. The research aims at clarifying the relationship between trust, resource dependency and goal consensus of organizations and the degree and perceived quality of cooperation.

Important to note here regarding the explanatory part of the research, is that the correlations between several variables are studied by determining the Pearson correlation coefficients r . The tests concerning the hypotheses are performed one-tailed since all hypotheses indicate a direction in which the dependent variable will change.

4.2 Degree of cooperation

The first sub-question that is formulated to answer the main research question is: what is the degree and quality of cooperation between organizations within the labor market region NHN? To answer this question, the research first looks at the extent to which organizations cooperate with each other. This degree of cooperation between organizations within the labor market region NHN depends on the number of ties that they have with each other and it is analyzed on the network level. By measuring and mapping these ties one can say something about who cooperates with whom and to what extent. To analyze the degree of cooperation, we will look at the total number of ties that individual organizations have, but also the ties within the three main themes of cooperation. The number of multiplex ties will be shown as well. So there are three possible ties between organizations, based on the three different themes of cooperation: School-Work, Work-Work and Benefits-Work. Table 2 first of all gives an overview of the number of ties within the network RPAhn. Next to the RPAhn as a whole, we will also look at the sub-regions separately, and at individual organizations.

Table 2. Overview of the number of possible and participating organizations and possible and actual number of ties

	Possible	Participating/actual
Number of RPAhn organizations	28	21
Number of ties (reciprocal and non-reciprocal)	588	207
Number of reciprocal ties	210	45
School-Work: total number of ties	588	186
Work-Work: total number of ties	588	141
Benefits-Work: total number of ties	588	166

Table 2 gives some overall descriptive statistics that are relevant when interpreting the results. It gives insight among others in the number of participating organizations, the number of possible ties and the number of possible reciprocal ties. When looking at table 2, it is important to note that the maximum number of ties that an organization can have is 28. Not every organizations has filled in the questionnaire ($n= 21$), but those who did had the possibility to indicate cooperation with all other organizations ($n= 28$). ROC Horizon is included both as part of sub-region Alkmaar and West-Friesland. ROC Kop van NH is part of sub-region Kop van Noord-Holland. A comparison of the number of ties regarding the three different themes shows that the degree of cooperation between organizations within the RPAhn is the highest within the School-Work theme with a mean of 8,9 ties per organization. Organizations that participate within this theme have on average nearly 9

connections with other network members. This theme focuses on the transition between education and labor and includes among others the project Jeugd Werkt!. The mean number of ties within the Benefits-Work theme is nearly 8 and concerns for an important part connections regarding public services to employers and eventually to the unemployed. The lowest degree of participation can be found in the Work-Work theme with a mean of 6,7 ties to other organizations. It should be noted here that the three sub-networks based on the main themes very much overlap, so the differences are very small and if present, caused by a couple of organizations. The means of the number of ties that are mentioned, are defined as the average number of ties one organization has to other organizations within all three themes. These ties can be both reciprocal and not reciprocal. The average number of ties that organizations have with others in total is 23,5. The total number of multiplex ties, so cooperation with others on all three themes, that organizations have is 6 which means that about a quarter of the total number ties is multiplex. The standard deviation is relatively high and this goes for the network as a whole as for cooperation within the specific themes. This means that the amount of ties that organizations have varies greatly. In short: there are large differences between organizations regarding the number of relationships with others. Some organizations indicate to cooperate with all 28 others on all three themes (municipality Hoorn and UWV), while others do not cooperate at all (municipality of Opmeer).

Table 3. Network description: degree of cooperation

	Number of ties School-Work	Number of ties Work-Work	Number of ties Benefits-Work	Total number of ties	Number of multiplex ties
RPAnhn network (n= 21)	M= 8,9 SD= 9,4	M= 6,7 SD= 9,0	M= 7,9 SD= 9,0	M= 23,5 SD= 26,4	M= 5,9 SD= 8,8
Sub-region Alkmaar (n= 4)	M= 6,3 SD= 5,2	M= 4,5 SD= 5,3	M= 4,0 SD= 5,2	M= 14,8 SD= 15,1	M= 2,3 SD= 3,3
Sub-region West-Friesland (n= 5)	M= 8,6 SD= 11,1	M= 6,8 SD= 12,1	M= 8,0 SD= 11,6	M= 23,4 SD= 34,6	M= 6,8 SD= 12,1
Sub-region Kop van NH (n= 5)	M= 6,2 SD= 5,6	M= 4,6 SD= 4,5	M= 4,8 SD= 3,6	M= 15,6 SD= 12,8	M= 3,6 SD= 3,9
Other organizations (n= 8)	M= 11,4 SD= 11,9	M= 8,3 SD= 11,0	M= 10,8 SD= 10,9	M= 30,4 SD= 32,1	M= 7,8 SD= 10,5

When looking at the sub-regions separately, one can see that the degree of cooperation is highest in West-Friesland. Organizations in this region have an average of more than 23 relationships (which is the mean total number of ties) with other organizations in the network. However again it should be noted that the standard deviation is very high with almost 35 ties. When we look closer we can see that the high mean in this sub-region is mainly due to the municipality of Hoorn, which is part of West-Friesland and has the maximum number of ties and thus indicates to cooperate with all other organizations on all three themes. So again, the differences between individual organizations are large. The degree of cooperation is the lowest within sub-region Alkmaar and Kop van NH. Interesting is that organizations other than municipalities have on average many connections with other organizations in the network with a mean of 30,4 ties.

To get a clearer image of the cooperation within the network, the organizations and their ties are mapped in figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows both reciprocal and non-reciprocal ties, figure 2 only shows reciprocal ties within the RPAnhn network. The municipalities that participate in the sub-region Alkmaar are colored red, the municipalities in the sub-region West-Friesland green and in the sub-region Kop van Noord-Holland yellow. The nodes of all other organizations have the color blue. The ties that are shown are reciprocated and non-reciprocated which means they are not in all cases confirmed by both organizations. The network maps first of all allow us to say something the density of the network. In total there are 812 possible ties between the 29 organizations. However, only 21 of the

organizations have indicated in the questionnaire with whom they cooperate. This leaves only (21 organizations x 28 possible cooperation partners =) 588 possible ties within the network. The RPAhn network as a whole has 207 relationships between the organizations. The density of the RPAhn network is therefore: $(207/588) \times 100 = 35,2\%$. The density of the network regarding the specific themes is different. The School-Work theme has total of 186 ties. This means a density of: $(186/588) \times 100 = 31,6\%$. The Work-Work network has 141 ties in total and thus a density of: $(141/588) \times 100 = 24\%$. This is the least dense network. The last theme, Benefits-Work, has 166 ties and a density of: $(166/588) \times 100 = 28,2\%$. To determine the density of the different themes, again the number of possible ties is 588 since all participating organizations can potentially cooperate on all themes. The results are logically in line with the above results shows that the degree of cooperation is highest within the School-Work theme, second highest in the Benefits-Work theme and lowest in the Work-Work theme.

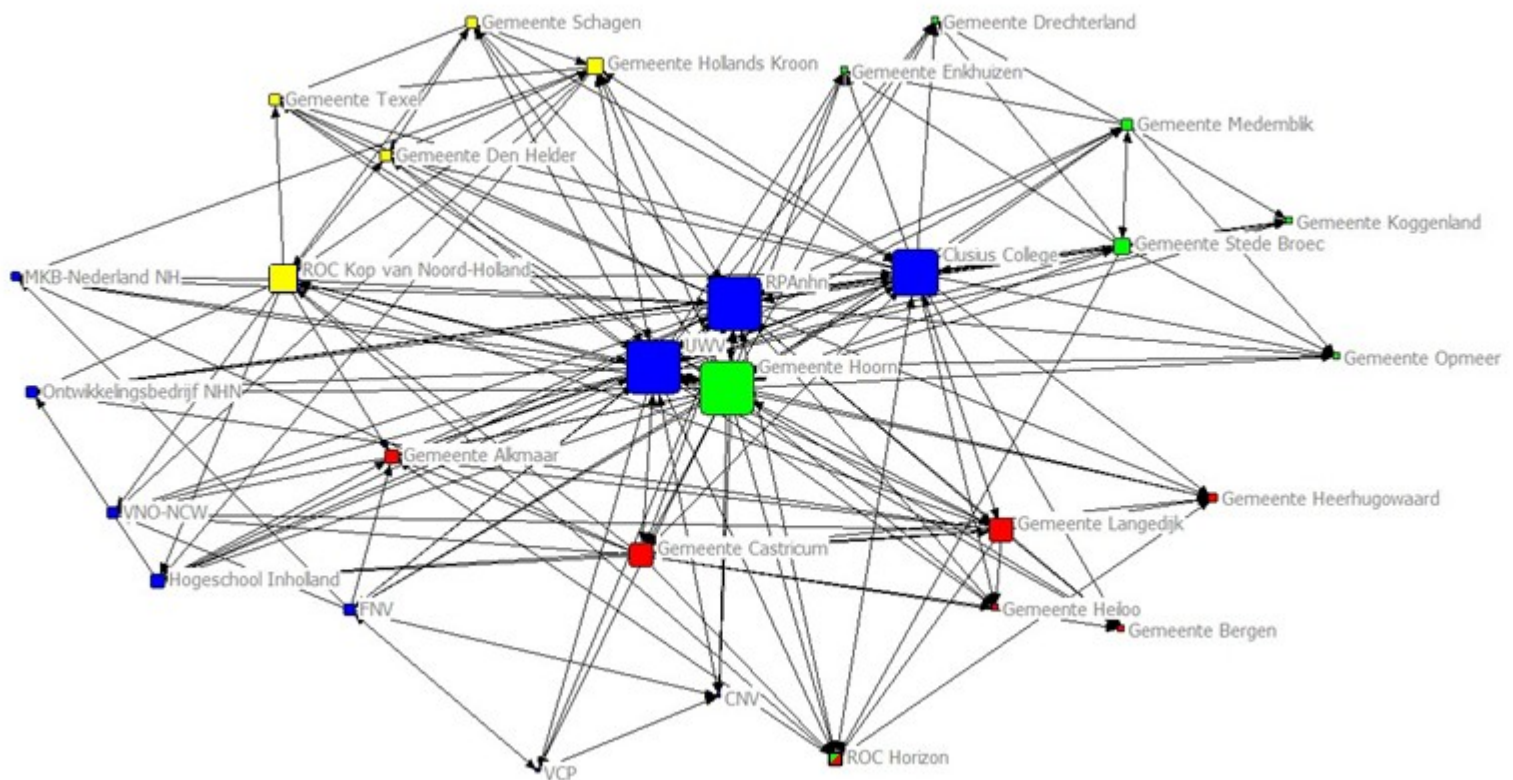


Figure 1. Reciprocal and non reciprocal ties within the RPAhn network

Figure 1 also shows the measure of centrality of different actors based on the number of relationships that they have relative to the other organizations. The organizations that are most central in the network as a whole are RPAhn as the network organization, UWV, the municipality of Hoorn and Clusius College. Hoorn is the municipality with the most relationships within the network. The municipality of Alkmaar does not have that many ties (it did not indicate cooperation in the questionnaire) but what stands out is that it is more drawn to the non-municipality organizations than to the municipalities within the sub-region. The municipalities within the sub-regions West-Friesland and Kop van Noord-Holland are more tied together in the network. The employers' and employee organizations can be found at the edge of the network and have relatively few ties to other organizations. There are no fragmented parts within the network of non-reciprocal ties.

Figure 2 shows the reciprocal ties within the network. This means relationships that are confirmed by both organizations. The organizations that did not fill in the questionnaire are filtered out since in that case a reciprocal tie is not possible. So figure 2 only shows the network of 21 organizations. The 8 organizations that have not filled in the questionnaire are left out of the figure. In the upper left corner of the image are the organizations that have filled in the questionnaire but do not have reciprocal ties. The total number of reciprocal ties in the network is 45. The density can also be determined here. Table 2 shows that there are 210 possible reciprocal ties. The density for the network regarding reciprocal ties is therefore: $(45/210) \times 100 = 21,4\%$. This means that around one fifth of the organizations within the network indicates and confirms to cooperate with each other. Notable is that the number of reciprocal ties is relatively low compared to the total number of ties (reciprocal and non-reciprocal). This is due to the fact that some organizations indicate to cooperate with a large number of organizations whereas some of the organizations indicate to cooperate with only a few or none. Again in this network, the RPAhn and UWV play a central role, together with the Clusius College. The RPAhn is an important actor and has the most reciprocal ties. It is a central actor in the network and connects a lot of the other organizations indirectly. The sub-regions are tied together although not every municipality is connected. The municipalities of Bergen, Opmeer and Texel do not have reciprocal ties to other organizations. The employers' and employee organizations are loosely tied to the network. VNO-NCW does not have reciprocal ties, FNV, CNV and VCP are minimally connected, only to the main central actors in the network, RPAhn and UWV. Although there are some parts of the network that are not very dense or highly connected, the network shows no fragmented parts.

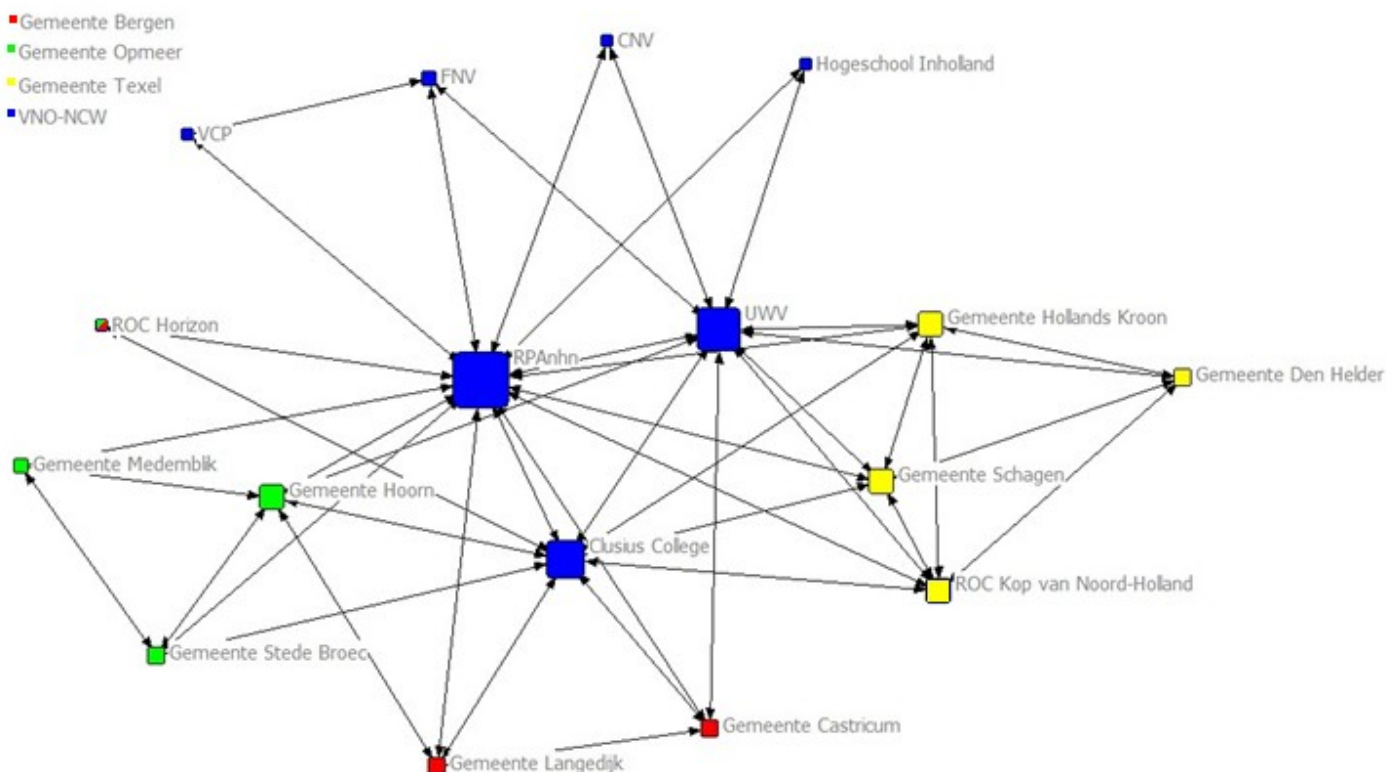


Figure 2. Reciprocal ties within the RPAhn network

The results show that the network is quite well connected. There are no fragmented parts, and most of the organizations are tied together directly or indirectly. The 35,2% overall density supports this statement. It means that more than one third of the possible ties between organizations within the RPAhn network, based on the organizations participating in the research, actually exist. When looking at the network with reciprocal ties, this number is considerably lower. So it is not clear for every organization with whom they cooperate or what is meant with cooperation within the network. The degree of cooperation is highest within the sub-region West-Friesland which can for a large part

be explained by the central role of the municipality of Hoorn. Next to Hoorn, there are three other important central organizations: RPAhn as network organization, UWV and Clusius College.

4.3 Quality of cooperation

In this paragraph, the second part of the first sub-question will be answered. It focuses on the quality of cooperation within the RPAhn network, which will be described. This quality of cooperation will be, just like the degree of cooperation, analyzed on the network level. It will be determined by looking at the commitment of organizations to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making. The latter is part of the cooperative culture that prevails in a network and it is defined by the compliance with network agreements, the extent to which the network can act quickly and decisively, and the transparency of decision-making (Boogers, Klok, Denters, & Sanders, 2016). This professionalism of decision-making is basically the perceived quality of cooperation by the network members. First, the descriptive statistics regarding the quality of cooperation will be studied here.

Table 4. Network description: quality of cooperation

	RPAhn network	School-Work	Work-Work	Benefits-Work
Commitment to network goals	M= 3,70 SD= 0,87 n= 18	M= 3,63 SD= 0,94 n= 16	M= 3,50 SD= 0,78 n= 15	M= 3,91 SD= 1,05 n= 16
Professionalism of decision-making	M= 3,11 SD= 0,85 n= 16	M= 3,09 SD= 0,85 n= 14	M= 3,12 SD= 0,89 n= 13	M= 3,12 SD= 0,80 n= 14
• Compliance with agreements	M= 3,00 SD= 0,76	M= 3,00 SD= 0,78	M= 3,00 SD= 0,95	M= 3,00 SD= 0,56
• Quick and decisive action	M= 2,85 SD= 0,93	M= 2,85 SD= 0,90	M= 2,83 SD= 0,94	M= 2,86 SD= 0,95
• Transparency	M= 3,49 SD= 1,24	M= 3,43 SD= 1,22	M= 3,54 SD= 1,20	M= 3,50 SD= 1,29

To measure the commitment to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making a five point scale is used. Regarding commitment, two statements were used and respondents could answer from 1= 'Completely disagree' to 5= 'Completely agree'. For the professionalism of decision-making respondents were asked to answer several questions were 1= 'To a very small extent' and 5= 'To a very large extent'. The mean value for the RPAhn network for commitment to network goals is 3,70. This is a positive score (since its value is greater than 3), which implies that most the organizations in the network agree with the statements and thus are committed to network goals. They make time and resources available for network activities and most of them agree to a moderately strong degree that they do everything they can to realize network goals. We can also look at differences between the mean values for commitment to network goals regarding the different themes. The commitment for network goals is highest among organizations that participate in cooperation on the Benefits-Work theme with a mean of 3,91. The commitment is lowest in the Work-Work theme with a mean of 3,50.

The mean value of the RPAhn network for the professionalism of decision-making is 3,14 which is considerably lower than the value for commitment to network goals. This value means that most of the organizations in the network think that the professionalism and quality of decision-making within the network is average. Differences between the networks regarding the different themes are small. To further elaborate on this average assessment of the professionalism of decision-making in the network, it is interesting to look at its different aspects: compliance with agreements, quick and decisive action within the network, and transparency of decision-making. One can see that of the three aspects, transparency of decision-making has the highest mean value of 3,49. Organizations believe

that the decision-making is reasonably transparent. However, the organizations are less satisfied with the compliance with agreements within the network, which is assessed as average with a value of 3,00. The ability of the network to act quickly and decisively is even assessed below average. The network participants think that not all organizations stick to the network agreements and the network as a whole is not able to respond quickly to problems, developments, etc. The patterns for these different aspects of professionalism of decision-making are roughly the same for the networks on the three themes.

Regarding the quality of cooperation within the RPAhn network the overall results show that network members are committed to the network goals. Most of them provide a sufficient amount of their time and resources in order to realize successful labor market policy. However, the professionalism of decision-making within the network is seen as less positive, which is mainly due to the perceived inability of the network to act quickly and decisively and the relatively low score for compliance with agreements.

4.4 Trust

The second sub-question that will be answered is: what is the influence of trust on the degree and quality of cooperation? So the first explanatory variable that will be tested is trust. First, some descriptive statistics will be mentioned. The mean value for trust within the RPAhn network is 3,77. This is a positive outcome (value greater than 3) and it can be said that most of the network members have trust in each other. The minimum value among all organizations is 3 which means there basically are no organizations that have a low degree of trust in certain others. When looking at the different sub-regions, it stands out that the average trust of organizations within Kop van Noord-Holland in other network members is considerably lower ($M = 3,41$) than in the other sub-regions (Alkmaar: $M = 3,73$ and West-Friesland: $M = 3,81$), however still positive.

To determine whether trust has a significant influence on the degree and quality of cooperation, four hypotheses have been formulated. The hypotheses will be tested by analyzing data on organizational level. When looking at trust as an explanatory variable, the first expectation is that trust in other organizations will have a positive effect on the degree and quality of cooperation. Regarding this expectation several hypotheses have been formulated. The first hypothesis H_{1a} is: an organization with a high degree of trust in other organizations, will cooperate with more other organizations than an organizations with a low degree of trust in others. To test this hypothesis, the research looks at the correlation between the average degree of trust that participating organizations in the RPAhn have in the other network members and the total number of cooperative relationships they have. The analysis shows that the correlation is significant, with an r of 0,57. This confirms hypothesis H_{1a} . More trust in others provides more cooperation between network members.

The second hypothesis regarding this explanatory variable states that higher trust in others provides more multiplex cooperation with others. This multiplex cooperation is part of the degree of cooperation between organizations. To determine this, again an analysis of the correlation between trust and multiplex cooperation has been executed. The analysis shows that the number of multiplex cooperative relationships an organization has is significantly influenced by the degree of trust in others with $r = 0,68$. So this hypothesis, H_{1b} , is confirmed too. Organizations within RPAhn that have a high degree of trust in their network members more often cooperate with them on all different themes and thus work more closely with each other. More trust ensures cooperation on different aspects and levels.

A third hypothesis that is formulated concerning the influence of trust in others focuses on the quality of cooperation between organizations. This H_{1c} states: an organization with a high degree of trust in other organizations has a higher commitment to network goals than an organization with a low degree of trust in other organizations. Also here, an analysis is performed to determine the correlation. Based on the outcome we can conclude that the degree of trust does not have a significant effect on the commitment of organizations to network goals with $r = 0,17$. Organizations that have a high degree of trust in other network members are not necessarily more committed to network goals and do not necessarily make more time and resources available.

The fourth hypothesis here concerns an expectation that focuses on the relationship between trust and quality of decision-making. It has been formulated as follows: an organization with a high degree of trust in others assesses the professionalism and quality of decision-making as higher than an organization with a low degree of trust in others. To determine this, the mean degree of trust of organizations is compared with the mean values for professionalism of decision-making. The analysis shows that there is no significant correlation between trust in others and the experienced quality of decision-making ($r = 0,36$). Organizations that have a high level of trust in their network members do not think that the quality of decision-making within the network is higher than organizations with a low degree of trust in others.

Table 5: Correlation analysis concerning hypotheses of trust

	Trust	
	r	N
H _{1a} : number of cooperative relationships	0,57**	21
H _{1b} : number of multiplex relationships	0,68**	21
H _{1c} : commitment to network goals	0,25	21
H _{1d} : professionalism of decision-making	0,36	21

Note: * $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$ *** $p < 0,001$ (one-tailed)

Regarding the RPAnhn network it can be said that trust between its members is at a good level. There are no organizations that do not trust other network participants at all which is a positive fact. Furthermore, the results show that trust of an organization in others has a significant influence on the degree of cooperation. Positive expectations of others leads to more cooperation. However, this does not necessarily lead to a higher perceived quality of cooperation since there is no significant correlation of trust with commitment to network goals and professionalism of decision-making.

4.5 Symbiotic dependency

The third sub-question that will be answered is: what is the influence of resource dependency on the degree and quality of cooperation? The analysis will focus on symbiotic dependency between organizations as a predictor of a high degree of cooperation with good quality. Organizations within the RPAnhn network have indicated which valuable resources they think the other network members have. Appendix I shows an overview of these results. When looking at the total indications on the five types of resources, it is interesting to see that most of the indications are by far on expertise. The numbers show that network participants think that others have a certain expertise that they do not have. This applies to most of the non-municipality organizations and Alkmaar, Heerhugowaard and Hoorn. The municipality of Alkmaar is also the one that brings legal power as a resource into the network, together with the UWV. The same goes for financial resources, Alkmaar is as the central municipality responsible for the largest part of this according to the other members. The lowest number of indications is for jobs as a resource. This makes sense since there are no companies directly involved in the RPAnhn network. Important organizations here are MKB-Nederland NH and VNO-NCW, which act on behalf of the business community and can play a role in the placement of jobseekers. The overview of appendix I also confirms the central role of RPAnhn, UWV and Hoorn as central actors in the network regarding resources. As said, the municipality of Alkmaar is also indicated by others as an important organizations which provides resources for the network. A large part of the municipalities do not have specific resources that are important for others.

What is interesting is that there are several organizations that have a symbiotic dependency relationship, but that do not cooperate with each other. In total this goes for eight relationships which are: Bergen and CNV, Bergen and VCP, Castricum and CNV, Castricum and VCP, Stede Broec and ROC Kop van NH, Clusius College and VNO-NCW, Clusius College and CNV, and Clusius College and VCP. This means that there are unexplored possibilities for cooperation. This offers opportunities

for the RPAhn network for more cooperation between employee organizations, municipalities and educational organizations.

To test the presumed between symbiotic resource dependency and the degree and quality of cooperation, several hypotheses have been formulated. Since resource dependency is a characteristic of a relationship between two organizations, some of these expectations have been tested by focusing on these relationships (hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b}). The first hypothesis regarding the effect of resource dependency is H_{2a} : organizations with symbiotic dependency cooperate more often with each other than organizations with no symbiotic dependency. In this case, both the dependent and the independent variable are dichotomous. Therefore a chi-squared test has been executed to analyze the connection between them. The chi-squared test shows that there is a significant relation between them. The value for Phi is 0,29 which means that there is a moderately strong relationship between the variables. Table 6 below shows that of the relationships where organizations are not symbiotically dependent, in only 73 of 170 cases there is cooperation. This comes down to a percentage of 42,9%. However, when organizations are symbiotically dependent, the percentage of cooperative relationships is much higher. In this case, the percentage is $(32/40) \times 100 = 80\%$. H_{2a} is confirmed and one can state that organizations that have symbiotic resource dependency, or in other words are complementary, cooperate more often with each other. Table 6 below also shows this. Cooperation between organizations is much more common when they have symbiotic resource dependency. The second hypothesis, H_{2b} , also focuses on the degree of cooperation. To test the influence of symbiotic dependency on multiplex cooperation between organizations, again a chi-squared test is executed. This analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between symbiotic dependency of organizations and multiplex cooperation. Again, this relationship is moderately strong with a Phi value of 0,29. Table 6 shows that only 48 of 170 (= 28,2%) organizations that are not symbiotically dependent cooperate with each other in a multiplex way, compared to 62,5% of the organizations that are symbiotically dependent. Organizations within the RPAhn that are symbiotically dependent more often cooperate on all three themes with each other. This can also be seen in the table below. Multiplex cooperation between organizations within the RPAhn is much more common when organizations complement each others' resources.

Table 6: Crosstabs with an overview of the number of (multiplex) cooperative ties and symbiotic dependency

		Symbiotic dependency		Total
		No	Yes	
H_{2a} : Cooperation	No	97	8	105
	Yes	73	32	105
	Total	170	40	210
	χ^2	18,09***		
H_{2b} : Multiplex cooperation	No	122	15	137
	Yes	48	25	73
	Total	170	40	210
	χ^2	17,24***		

Note: * $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$ *** $p < 0,001$ (one-tailed)

There are also two hypotheses regarding the quality of cooperation. First of all the relationship between resource dependency and commitment to network goals is measured on organizational level. The expectation is that an organization with many symbiotic dependency relationships has a higher commitment to network goals than an organization with few symbiotic dependency relationships. To test this hypothesis H_{2c} an analysis is executed which allows to determine the correlation. The analysis shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the number of symbiotic relationships and the level of commitment to network goals. The correlation coefficient r is 0,49. The last hypothesis regarding resource dependency and quality of cooperation is H_{2d} which states that: an organization with many symbiotic dependency relationships assesses the professionalism and quality of decision-

making as higher than an organization with few symbiotic dependency relationships. The analysis of the correlation that has been executed allows to conclude that there is a significant relationship between the number of symbiotic relationships and the assessed professionalism of decision-making with $r = 0,47$. Organizations with many symbiotic dependency relationships with others judge the professionalism in the network as higher than organizations with few of these relationships.

Table 7: Correlation analysis concerning hypotheses of symbiotic dependency

	Symbiotic dependency	
	r	N
H _{2c} : commitment to network goals	0,49*	21
H _{2d} : professionalism of decision-making	0,47*	21

Note: * $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$ *** $p < 0,001$ (one-tailed)

It can be stated that the main reason for the involvement of most of the network members in the network is their expertise. This is also confirmed by the participants. A large part of the organizations has a specific area of expertise. The municipality of Alkmaar and RPAhn are seen as the most important organizations concerning financial resources (or fund raising). RPAhn as a network organization has an important role, however it does not have legal authority according to its members. When looking at the third sub-question and at symbiotic dependency as an explanatory variable, it can be said that it has a significant influence on both the degree and quality of cooperation. Symbiotic dependency among organizations leads to (multiplex) cooperation. Next to that, organizations with many symbiotic dependency relationships are more committed to network goals and assess the professionalism of decision-making higher.

4.6 Goal consensus

The fourth sub-question is related to goal consensus between organizations. Literature states that goal consensus leads to network cooperation (Rhodes, 2006). To determine if this goal consensus also influences cooperation regarding regional labor market policy, several hypotheses have been formulated. The research first looks into some descriptive statistics on the network level. Appendix II shows an overview of the mean values for goal consensus for every organization within the RPAhn. As said, the possible answers range from 1= 'To a very low degree' of consensus to 5= 'To a very high degree' of consensus. Respondents have indicated that the degree of goal consensus is highest among the RPAhn as network organization, ROC Kop van NH and Ontwikkelingsbedrijf NHN (with mean values of 3,93, 3,89 and 3,93). The lowest values can be found, without exception, at the employers' and employee organizations: VNO-NCW, MKB-Nederland NHN, FNV, CNV and VCP. These mean values are all close 3,00. The mean value for goal consensus of VNO-NCW is even lower with 2,92. So regarding the goals that network members pursue, the employers' and employee organizations are seen as different from the rest.

Goal consensus may explain the degree of cooperation in the RPAhn network. The first hypothesis regarding the influence of goal consensus on cooperation is H_{3a} and it states: an organization with a high level of goal consensus with others, will cooperate with more other organizations than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others. To determine this level of goal consensus with others, the research focuses on the mean values for goal consensus that are indicated by the respondents. This mean value for goal consensus is analyzed in light of the total number of cooperative ties. The correlation between these variables is significant with $r = 0,37$. So the hypothesis is confirmed and there is a significant influence of goal consensus between organizations on the number of cooperative relationships. An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others cooperates with more other organizations than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others. The second hypothesis is focused on the influence of goal consensus between organizations on multiplex cooperation. H_{3b} states: an organization with a high level of goal consensus with others, will have multiplex cooperation with more other organizations than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others. Again, an analysis has been executed to

determine the correlation. This analysis shows that goal consensus between organizations does not have a significant influence on multiplex cooperation with $r = 0,33$. H_{3b} is therefore rejected. An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others does not necessarily have more multiplex cooperative relationships.

Next to the degree of cooperation, the research attempts to clarify the relationship between goal consensus and the quality of cooperation. The third hypothesis H_{3c} concentrates on commitment to network goals. The expectation is that a high level of goal consensus with others leads to a higher commitment to network goals. An analysis shows that there is a weak correlation between these variables ($r = 0,09$). An organization with a high level of goal consensus with others is not necessarily more committed to network goals. The fourth and last hypothesis H_{3d} is: an organization that has a high level of goal consensus with others, assesses the professionalism of decision-making as higher than an organization with a low level of goal consensus with others. An analysis shows that there is no significant influence of the level of goal consensus on the perceived professionalism of decision-making with $r = -0,40$. The correlation is actually negative which could indicate that the relationship goes the other way around, however this coefficient is not significant. It can be concluded that a higher level of goal consensus with others does not by definition lead to a more positive perception of the professionalism of decision-making.

Table 8: Correlation analysis concerning hypotheses of goal consensus

	Goal consensus	
	r	N
H_{3a} : number of cooperative relationships	0,37*	21
H_{3b} : number of multiplex relationships	0,33	21
H_{3c} : commitment to network goals	0,09	21
H_{3d} : professionalism of decision-making	-0,40	21

Note: * $p < 0,05$ ** $p < 0,01$ *** $p < 0,001$ (one-tailed)

The results show that the relationship between goal consensus of organizations and the degree of cooperation is not very strong. The number of cooperative relationships of an organization is affected by the degree of consensus with others, but the number of multiplex cooperative relationships is not. When looking at the quality of cooperation, it can be stated that this is entirely not influenced by the level of goal consensus. As the level of goal consensus with network members increases, organizations are not necessarily more committed to network goals and do not perceive the professionalism of decision-making as higher.

4.7 Additional results

Respondents had the possibility to give additional comments in the questionnaire. These are focused on improving the degree and quality of cooperation in the network. While the comments will not be analyzed quantitatively, they are worth mentioning here. Some of the recurring answers will be discussed. The first point of improvement that is mentioned by several organizations is the reporting of results. This will give both the network and its organizations feedback of the performances. It should be clear for organizations what benefits their efforts produce. Next to that, it can give important insights in the added value of this network cooperation. This insight in the performances and value of network cooperation can create a positive boost. It can positively influence the involvement and commitment of organizations. Several organizations indicate that this reporting of results and giving feedback to all partners is not done enough. It is not clear to everyone what time and resources they put in to the network and what is the exact outcome. Another matter that is indicated by several organizations is the expanding of knowledge sharing. Professionals and organizations have to learn from each other. This will allow the level of knowledge and expertise to rise, but also provides insight in each others' interests. In the current situation, this is still not done enough.

Another point that is worth mentioning is the cooperation in employers' service points (WSP). Several organizations stated that they participate in the network through such a cooperative construction. There are two of them in Noord-Holland Noord, WerkSaam and Halte Werk. Halte Werk only exists of the municipalities Alkmaar, Heerhugowaar and Langedijk. WerkSaam is the largest one and consists of all the municipalities of the sub-region West-Friesland. Several of these organizations indicated that they have positive experiences in participating through WerkSaam. Other organizations stated that the possibilities for other employers' service points should be explored or to set up one large for the whole region.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Network description

In this chapter, several conclusions will be drawn from the results in order to formulate an answer to the separate sub-questions and the main research question. This main research question is: *What is the degree and quality of cooperation within the labor market region Noord-Holland Noord, and how are these influenced by trust, goal consensus and resource dependency?* First, the RPAhn network as a whole will be described by looking at the degree and quality of cooperation between its member organizations. After this, conclusions regarding trust, resource dependency and goal consensus as predictors of the degree and quality of cooperation in the RPAhn network will be drawn.

The analysis of the degree of cooperation between organizations in the RPAhn network displays that the network overall is reasonably well connected. This can be seen in figure 1 and is supported by the percentage of the density which means that the actual number of connections in the network is 35% of the possible number of connections between all organizations. So overall, more than one third of all the organizations cooperate with each other. When looking at reciprocal and non-reciprocal ties, there are no organizations that are not connected at all to one of the network members. Next to that, there are no fragmented parts which means there are no separate sections of the network that operate completely on their own. However, what is interesting is that the municipalities in the same sub-regions are drawn together and mainly cooperate with municipalities within their own sub-regions. Exceptions here are the municipalities of Alkmaar and Hoorn. Alkmaar is also connected to the employee and educational organizations. Hoorn on the other hand, is connected to many other municipalities and employers, employee and educational organizations. This leads to a large number of connections and thus a central role within the RPAhn network. Besides the municipality of Hoorn, there are three other organizations with a very central role in the network: RPAhn, UWV and Clusius College. Clusius College, as educational organization with various locations in the region, is an important connector regarding the School-Work theme. This is based on the relative number of cooperative ties on all three themes. These three organizations are connected to a large number of municipalities, employers', employee and educational organizations. An important general finding in this research concerning regional labor market policy is that a coordinating network organization definitely has added value as a connector of organizations. This is true when focusing on the ties between organization, but a coordinating network organization is also a connector of different individual goals as is shown by the degree of goal consensus. Next to that, such an organization is also crucial in the contribution of certain specific resources in the network such as expertise (of the network and its members) and the realization of financial resources.

Regarding the three main themes of the RPAhn network, one can conclude that the most of the cooperation between organizations takes place within the School-Work theme. The average number of cooperative ties are a little lower within the Benefits-Work theme and the lowest in the Work-Work theme. When looking at the three sub-regions, the degree of cooperation is highest in West-Friesland. For an important part this can be explained by the central role of Hoorn. The degree of cooperation in the sub-regions Alkmaar and Kop van NH is somewhat lower. The network of reciprocal ties also shows interesting results. Again, the RPAhn as network organization can be seen as a spider in the web. A large part of the other network members confirm to work with RPAhn as an organization. But if this network is compared with the network of reciprocal and non-reciprocal ties, the relative number of connections and thus the density is a lot lower. This means that it is not clear to every organization with whom they cooperate within the RPAhn, or organizations have very different definitions of what they define as cooperation. Either way, the number of ties is significantly lower here.

Next to the degree of cooperation, there are conclusions to be drawn regarding the quality of cooperation between the RPAhn network members. To determine this quality of cooperation the respondents indicated their commitment to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making within the RPAhn network. Overall it can be stated that the commitment of network members to realize network goals is moderately high. Most of the organizations in the network indicate to invest a

sufficient amount of their time and resources for a sustainable labor market in Noord-Holland Noord. The commitment to network goals is highest among organizations that participate in the Benefits-Work theme. So a conclusion might be that organizations that participate in regional labor market policy are mostly dedicated to the unemployed, as to students and employees. The second indicator of the quality of cooperation is the professionalism of decision-making. This is measured by looking at the compliance with agreements, the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively and transparency of decision-making. This last aspect, transparency of decision-making, is positive. Organizations indicate that the decision-making process within the RPAhn network overall is open and transparent, and that there are clear agreements between members. However, the compliance of organizations with these network agreements is less well assessed. Organizations in the network do not think that others do what is expected of them. So while most of the organizations indicate that they are very committed to network goals, they do not think this is the case for others. There is something to gain for the network here. This can be linked to the indication of several organizations that the performances, efforts and results of the network and every organization are not very clear. These are not reported and communicated enough according to some organizations. More insight in the commitment, time and resources spend by others, and the performances will create more understanding. Next to compliance with agreements, the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively is below average according to the network members. The RPAhn as network organization, is the coordinating organization in the network. However, they lack legal authority as indicated by the other members. The inability of the network to act quickly and decisive can have something to do with the absence of legal power at the coordinating organization. This can be difficult when facing problems in the network, for example when organizations do not comply with agreements or when the performance of certain projects is poor. Also, this can be an obstacle when the network has to anticipate on new developments. In general it can be stated that a coordinating network organization also has to have a certain degree of legal power in order to let network members comply with agreements and be able to decide quickly and decisively.

The level of trust of network members in each other is good. There are no organizations that do not trust others at all. It can be stated that there is a solid foundation for cooperation (Boogers, Klok, Denters, & Sanders, 2016; Hay & Richards, 2000). There are some differences between the sub-regions. Organizations in the sub-region Kop van NH have a lower level of trust in other network members than organizations in the other sub-regions. It could be these organizations are more skeptical about this network cooperation. However, the level of trust of these organizations in others is still on the positive side. When looking at the analysis of network resources, the research has shown that most of the organizations participate in the cooperation because of their specific expertise. This goes especially for the non-municipality organizations. The municipality of Alkmaar and UWV are seen as the most important legal authorities in the network. Most of the municipalities do not have important valuable resources that other organizations do not have, but participate since this is regulated by law. Their main goal is to have their residents participate in and profit from the regional labor market policy. There are few organizations with jobs as resources. Business companies are not directly involved in the network but represented by organizations such as MKB-Nederland NHN and VNO-NCW. The municipality of Alkmaar and RPAhn as network organization are seen as the most important organizations regarding financial resources. Based on the results there is also something to say about goal consensus between organizations in the RPAhn network. There are three organizations that have the most goal consensus with others: RPAhn as network organization, ROC Kop van NH and Ontwikkelingsbedrijf NHN. These organizations pursue goals that are in line with most of the other organizations. The employer' and employee organizations have the least goals consensus with others. These organizations are seen as different from the rest. They mainly focus on employer' and employee interests, where the other organizations focus on the interests students and unemployed, and not or only partly on employers and employees.

5.2 Explanation of degree and quality of cooperation

Based on the theory, several hypotheses have been formulated and tested, focusing on the influence of trust, symbiotic resource dependency and goal consensus on the degree and quality of cooperation. From the analysis of these relationships it can be concluded that the level of trust of an organization in others has a positive influence on the degree of cooperation. An organization with a lot of trust in others cooperates with more other organizations than an organization with little trust in others. Also, these cooperative relationships are more often multiplex and thus intensive. So regarding policy networks it can be said that when participating organizations trust each other, there will be more cooperation and this cooperation will be more intensive. Therefore it would be worth when starting or establishing such a network to build trust between organizations. Another finding is that the influence of trust in others does not necessarily mean a better quality of cooperation. An organization with a high degree of trust in others does not think that the quality of cooperation within the network is better. The expectation was that organizations with a high degree of trust in others and thus positive expectations, would be more committed to network goals. This is not necessarily the case. The same goes for the influence of trust in others on the professionalism of decision-making. Positive expectations of others do not by definition mean that organizations also think that others comply with agreements, that the network functions good and can act quickly and decisively, and that the decision-making is more transparent. In other words: more trust in others does not have to mean that the quality of cooperative relationships is better. So in general this means that policy networks with a high level of trust between its members will provide more services for their clients, although the cooperation will not always run more smoothly.

The influence of symbiotic dependency on the degree and quality of cooperation is also tested. This research has shown that symbiotic dependency between organizations has certain important consequences for cooperation between them. First of all, it can be stated that when organizations are symbiotically dependent, they more often cooperate with each other. This also applies to multiplex cooperation. So when organizations depend on each others' resources and see these as valuable for their own organization and cooperation, they more often cooperate with each other and this cooperation often also is more intensive. The results have shown that this reason for cooperation within the RPAhn network for most of the organization is each others' expertise and for some of them the fact that they have financial resources or certain legal rights. Another interesting conclusion is that a higher number of symbiotic dependency relationships of an organization leads to a higher quality of cooperation. This goes both for the commitment of an organization to network goals and for the professionalism of decision-making. So symbiotic resource dependency is an important factor for organizations when deciding to cooperate, to assess how this process of cooperation is going and how much time and effort they are going to put in it. For policy networks this means that it is very important to have an indication of the different resources that every organization contributes and also needs. This dependency creates a certain incentive for organizations to cooperate and commit themselves to this cooperation. A network with a well balanced composition of organizations and resources will be able to create more and better services for their clients.

The third and last independent variable that is tested is the level of goal consensus between organizations. This research has shown that, of the three explanatory variables for the degree and quality of cooperation, the level of goal consensus is the weakest one. Goal consensus between organizations only has an influence on the degree of cooperation. So organizations with a high level of goal consensus with other, cooperate with more other organizations. This does not count for multiplex cooperation. There is no influence of goal consensus on the commitment to network goals and the professionalism of decision-making. Apparently, organizations that have a high level of goal consensus with others are not always more committed to network goals. Next to that, these organizations do not think the network is better able to make quick decisions and act decisively, as one would think when the goals of several organizations match better. So in general, a network with consensus over goals between its member organizations will provide more services for its clients but this process of cooperation will not always be of high-quality.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Interpretation of the results

The results of the research have shown that the degree of cooperation in the RPAhn network is moderately high and there is an important role for several organizations. First of all, the RPAhn as network organization, is an important connector in the network as a whole. They are formally the coordinator of the network and the research shows that they function in this way. They are important regarding financial resources (raising and distributing funds) and because of their expertise. However, as coordinator, they are not seen as a legal authority, which role mainly lies at the central municipality of Alkmaar and UWV. This can have something to do with the low score for 'compliance with agreements' and 'quick and decisive action' in the network. The central actor does not have the power to make organizations comply with agreements and make the network act quickly and decisively. Alkmaar, as the designated central municipality, apparently has a somewhat different role than other municipalities. They are more connected to the employers', employee and educational organizations. The same goes for Hoorn. These two have legal power according to other organizations. Hoorn, as the central organizer of WerkSaam West-Friesland (the regional learn-work company or employers' service point), has an important role in the network. Both in its own sub-region as outside and to non-municipality organizations.

The internal validity of the research is good. However, it is important to discuss some matters here. First of all, when speaking about the quality of cooperation in this research, it is crucial to understand that this is the perceived quality of cooperation by organizations. The commitment to network goals is not defined by objectively measuring the invested time and resources, but by indication of respondents of the organizations. Another issue that has to be mentioned here is that in this research the level of trust in others is treated as an independent variable. Trust is used as a predictor of the degree and quality of cooperation. It is also possible to see trust as a consequence of cooperation. An organization can for example, lose its trust when another organization does not comply with certain agreements. Trust, in that case, can be seen as a continuous process. However, in light of the research it is interesting and valuable to see as independent variable. It allows to conclude that trust between organizations is important when organizations cooperate with each other. Interesting is that the definition of Kenis and Provan (2009) of trust contains 'positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of others'. The research proves that trust influences the chance of cooperation, but does not influence the perceived quality of cooperation. So although organizations with a high degree of trust in others have positive expectations, they are not more committed to network goals and do not assess the professionalism of decision-making, so the participation of others, as more positive.

Since this research focuses on one specific case, the external validity is not extremely high. The results apply to the labor market region of NHN. However, when looking at different labor market regions, especially those with a regional platform for labor market policy, some important lessons can be drawn. When a labor market network is established or maintained, it can be very helpful to map the mutual relationships between organizations. If there is trust, organizations will work together. The same goes for complementary resources and, to a lesser extent, for goal consensus between organizations. So a network coordinator or organizer should have a good indication of the individual goals of organizations, and what important resources they can contribute. Also, exploring the symbiotic dependency relationships and account for this at the formation of a network can lead to cooperation with a high quality. Next to that, when participating in the network, all this information should also be communicated to network members. This can create understanding and clarity regarding expected performances, commitment, etc.

In the theory section, the strategic and structural approach regarding network participation were mentioned. This research found support that both theories matter when looking at network participation regarding regional labor market policy. The strategic approach states that individual goals of organizations are leading when organizations decide to participate in a network. When they participate, these different goals cannot be too far apart. Goal consensus influences the chance of cooperation between organizations. This also supports the theory of Hay and Richards (2000) and

Boogers, Klok, Denters and Sanders (2016). Shared goals form a solid basis for network cooperation. If these goals are too far apart, there is no foundation for a network. However, this finding does not fully support the theory of Fenger and Klok (2001) that goal consensus influences the chance of coalition behavior. Organizations with matching goals cooperate more often, but do not assess the ability of the network and its partners to act quickly and decisively as higher. The making of decisions is not by definition easier or more quickly. Overall it can be stated that the level of goal consensus between organizations within the RPAhn network is reasonably good and there is fundament for cooperation and network survival (Provan, Veazie, Staten, & Teufel-Shone, 2005).

The structural approach states that organizations are only part of a larger structure, and need each other and the network to produce their services. The findings of the research show that cooperation between organizations depends on symbiotic resource dependency. This does support the theory of Fenger and Klok (2001). Organizations need something from one another and therefore form a coalition. Besides that, this also influences their own commitment to network goals and the perceived professionalism of decision-making. What is interesting is that symbiotic dependency leads to higher quality of cooperation. This could be because organizations are more positive about the possibilities for cooperation and therefore more committed. Next to that, organizations could think that, since there are complementary resources in the network, this network is better able to respond to problems, new developments, etc. In general, it can be stated that both the structural and strategic approach are important for organizations within the labor market region NHN to participate in the network. This supports the findings of Marsh and Smith (2000) that organizations decide to participate and cooperate in a network based on the knowledge and resources they have, but are also to a certain extent forced to take part in the network. There is a certain interaction. Organizations in the RPAhn network need each others' resources, mainly expertise but also financial resources and legal authority, to provide services that suit vulnerable groups in search for a job or that help current employees to a more sustainable form of employment.

6.2 Recommendations

One first important practical recommendation is about unlocking the full potential of the RPAhn network. As the research has shown, symbiotic dependency is an important aspect which relates to the degree and quality of cooperation. The analysis of relationships with symbiotic resource dependency between organizations within the RPAhn network has shown that there are several organizations that indicate to have resources that would be very useful when providing services to youth, employees and jobseekers. This goes among others for municipalities, educational organizations and employee organizations. It would be valuable to explore these potentially new cooperative relationships as mentioned in paragraph 4.5. This can be done by the RPAhn as network organization, by inviting these parties into a dialogue and see what the possibilities for cooperation are. It can lead to a stronger network with more and better services.

Another practical recommendation which is in line with the one above, concerns new network partners. The organizations indicated that there is a deficit of 'jobs' as a resource in the network. As indicated earlier, it could be that businesses are represented by MKB-Nederland NHN and VNO-NCW but it can be worth it to consider an employment agency or companies to directly participate in the network. Such a partnership with an employment agency or certain businesses can create a whole new set of ties with symbiotic dependency between organizations and thus new possibilities for projects and initiatives. And as the research has shown this is especially important when considering to make certain organizations part of the network. It is important to continually monitor the possibility of new partners. New partners mean new resources, cooperations, ideas and eventually new high-quality services.

As said before, there is much to gain for the network in communicating performances, commitment and dedication of network members, and results. This can be done in a number of ways. Think of sharing success stories, showing numbers of the results of projects, monitor and communicate the time and effort put in by various organizations, etc. This sends a message to the network and its members and can increase cooperation, commitment, enthusiasm and creativity.

There is an important role here for the RPAhn as network organization, which should coordinate and stimulate this communication. Eventually, this network cooperation is about providing services of good quality. It is crucial to enlarge trust and understanding between organizations in order to provide more services for jobseekers, students and employees.

The RPAhn can also play an important role in improving the compliance of organizations with the network agreements. As main coordinator, organizations should be reminded of their duties regarding the network and the RPAhn should point out to them if and where things go wrong. Eventually this will lead to more awareness and involvement among network members, which in turn should also improve the overall ability of the network to act and respond quickly and decisively to new developments, problems, etc. Another recommendation that can be made here is to explore the possibilities for more or better cooperation through employers' service points. Several organizations indicated that find it pleasant to cooperate through such a structure. The results of the research also show that the degree of cooperation is higher in West-Friesland, where there is a large employers' service point. Next to that, several organizations indicated to find it cooperation through this employers' service point pleasant. Although, the research showed that the quality of cooperation is not by definition higher in the sub-region West-Friesland which has WerkSaam, it can be worth exploring the possibilities of new constructions and the overall opinions of all the organizations.

There are several aspects that require more research in order to get more important knowledge. First there is the issue of the difference between the density percentages of both the network of reciprocal and non-reciprocal ties and the network of only reciprocal ties. The findings prove there are far less ties that are reciprocated. It would be interesting to clarify how this is possible. It could be that it is not clear to every organization within the RPAhn network with whom they cooperate and on which theme. If it is not clear with whom and in what way organizations cooperate, this indicates a lack of insight in activities and performances. It could also be that organizations have very different definitions of what they think is cooperation. In both cases it should be valuable to look deeper into this.

Another key point here is the fact that the ability of the RPAhn network to act quickly and decisively is assessed below average and the compliance of network members to agreements is average. Further in depth analysis can provide insight under what specific circumstances the network is not able to respond quickly and decisively. Were there certain problems that the RPAhn network could not handle? Or new developments that the RPAhn network could not adapt to? More research should be able to indicate under what circumstances the network functions good and where it should be improved. This also goes for the compliance with agreements. A further analysis should demonstrate what specific agreements can be improved. Do these mainly concern financial agreements, agreements regarding efforts or resources, etc.

6.3 Limitations

The research has some limitations that will be mentioned here. Since the research is quantitative, a large part of the questions and answers that were used are generalized. This can cause a lack of depth in the answers to a certain extent. This is for example the case with the findings regarding the ability of the network to act quickly and decisively and the assessment of the compliance with agreements. Therefore, as discussed above, it would be a good thing to further explore this. The same goes for the high number of non-reciprocated ties. The research does not fully clarify why this is the case.

What should also be discussed here is the number of respondents. Of the 29 organizations within the RPAhn network, only 21 indicated in the questionnaire with whom they cooperate. This should be accounted for when interpreting the results. The municipality of Alkmaar for example, is not one of the central organizations in the network image. They did not fill in the cooperative part in the questionnaire and therefore a large number of their ties are probably missing. The same goes for several of the other organizations. This limits the way in which the network as a whole and the degree of cooperation in it could be described. However, in the end, figure 1 and 2 allow to get a rough insight

of the central organizations, the differences in the network and the absence of clear fragmented parts or groups.

One last matter that is important to note here concerns the fact that the School-Work theme has the most average cooperative ties. This does not necessarily say something about the intensity of the cooperation within this theme. Since several organizations that mainly focus on this specific theme participate in the network, the possible number of ties can be higher. However, it shows that there is active cooperation between organizations regarding the support of youngsters in Noord-Holland Noord to find a suitable job.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: symbiotic resource dependency

Appendix I: number of valuable resource indications RPAhn members (n= 22)

	Financial resources	Potential work force	Jobs	Expertise	Legal power	Total
Alkmaar	9	6	2	8	11	36
Heerhugowaard	5	2	1	8	5	21
Langedijk	4	1	1	3	3	12
Bergen	4	1	1	3	3	12
Castricum	4	1	2	3	3	13
Heiloo	4	1	1	4	3	13
Hoorn	5	4	1	8	6	24
Drechterland	4	2	1	3	3	13
Enkhuizen	4	2	1	3	3	13
Koggenland	4	2	1	3	3	13
Opmeer	3	2	1	2	3	11
Medemblik	3	3	1	2	3	12
Stede Broec	3	1	1	2	3	10
Den Helder	4	2	1	4	5	16
Hollands Kroon	3	2	1	3	3	12
Schagen	3	2	1	2	3	11
Texel	3	1	1	2	3	10
RPAhn	8	4	1	12	2	27
UWV	5	6	4	11	7	33
Hogeschool Inholland	0	3	0	7	0	10
Clusius College	0	2	0	11	0	13
ROC Horizon	1	3	0	10	0	14
ROC Kop van NH	1	3	0	8	0	12
MKB-Nederland	1	1	7	7	0	16
NHN						
VNO-NCW	1	1	5	9	0	16
FNV	0	1	0	9	0	10
CNV	0	1	0	8	0	9
VCP	0	1	0	8	0	9
Ontwikkelingsbedri jf NHN	4	4	0	13	0	21
Total	90	66	36	176	75	443

Appendix II: goal consensus

Appendix II: values for goal consensus for every RPAhn member

	Mean	Standard deviation
Alkmaar	3,50	0,94
Heerhugowaard	3,54	0,97
Langedijk	3,45	0,93
Bergen	3,70	1,06
Castricum	3,60	0,97
Heiloo	3,73	1,01
Hoorn	3,69	0,75
Drechterland	3,70	0,82
Enkhuizen	3,70	0,82
Koggenland	3,70	0,82
Opmeer	3,70	0,82
Medemblik	3,67	0,87
Stede Broec	3,67	0,87
Den Helder	3,70	0,82
Hollands Kroon	3,78	0,82

Schagen	3,75	0,89
Texel	3,78	0,83
RPAhn	3,93	0,80
UWV	3,73	0,46
Hogeschool Inholland	3,60	0,97
Clusius College	3,60	0,97
ROC Horizon	3,56	1,13
ROC Kop van NH	3,89	1,05
MKB-Nederland NHN	3,08	0,95
VNO-NCW	2,92	0,79
FNV	3,00	1,25
CNV	3,10	1,10
VCP	3,10	1,10
Ontwikkelingsbedrijf NHN	3,93	0,80
