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### The power to collaborate : How judicious use of power accelerates the strategic capacity of regions in the Netherlands

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**Publication date**  
2010

[Link to publication](#)

#### **Citation for published version (APA):**

Haran, N. (2010). *The power to collaborate : How judicious use of power accelerates the strategic capacity of regions in the Netherlands*. Eburon.

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## BRIDGES OVER RIVERS: THE STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN

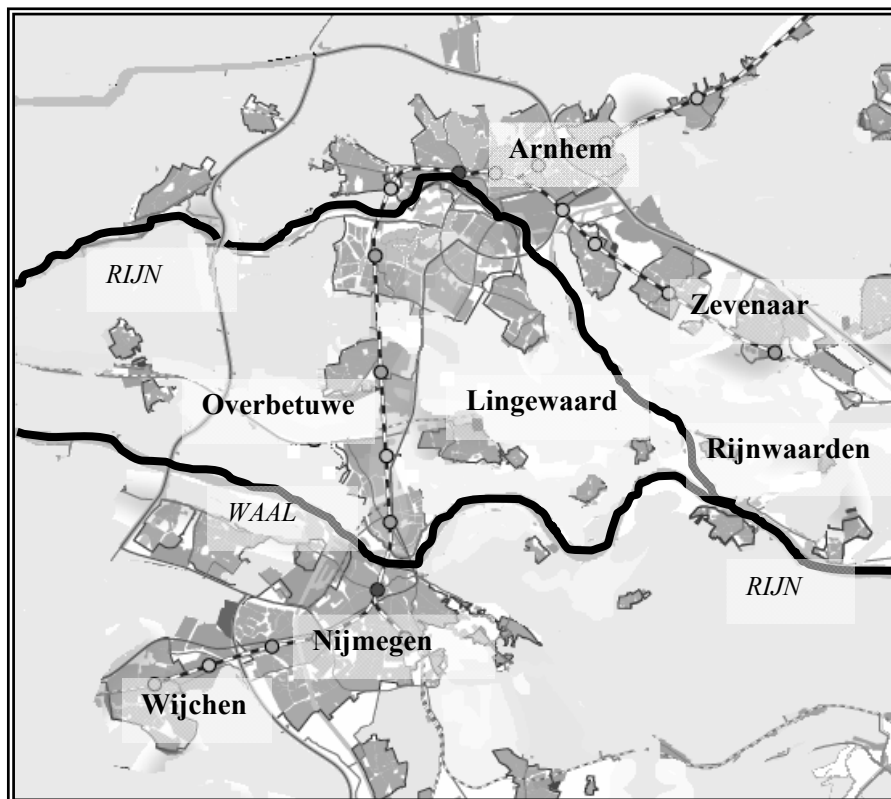
The city region of Arnhem-Nijmegen is a Regional Collaborative Association (RCA) situated in the east of the Netherlands. In this RCA, some 20 neighboring municipalities collaborate in order to form an “*Attractive international competitive region with the best economic performance after the Randstad*” (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.14) The Arnhem-Nijmegen RCA (also referred to here as “city region”) is made up of the cities Arnhem (pop. 141,000 in 2006), Nijmegen (pop. 158,000 in 2006) and 18 smaller municipalities located in their hinterland. As a non-voluntary RCA, the case of Arnhem-Nijmegen provides insight concerning the impact of legislation and formalized regional cooperation on competitive strategic capacity. According to the research hypotheses, the non-voluntary features of the Arnhem-Nijmegen RCA and its formal competences should increase strategic capacity and enable more synergies between stakeholders and between policy fields.

The case of the Arnhem-Nijmegen reflects on the three interrelated questions at the heart of this research. It will shed light on the relation between the non-voluntary character of an RCA and its strategic capacity; the relation between the level of inclusion and the ability to produce competitive strategic output; and the manner by which different forms of power may influence such strategic capacity. The first part (4.1) describes the context in which the city region operates. It will provide a short description of the background of the city region, its organizational setting, and its strategic output as shown from agreements, documents and interviews conducted with politicians and practitioners involved. In the second part (4.2) the strategic capacity of the city region will be analyzed based on the analyzing model introduced in chapter 2. In this part, an assessment is made of the RCA’s capacity to involve stakeholders and integrate policy themes (‘reception’); define long-term strategy, prevail among alternatives and select activities accordingly (‘consolidation’); and eventually, to implement them (‘realization’). After the analyses of the strategic capacity, some reflections will be given over the relation between the compulsory character of the RCA and the strategic capacity it shows. The third section (4.3) analyses the institutional settings and power relations as potential explanatory variables for the demonstrated strategic capacity. Here, the relation between power concentration and strategic capacity of the city region will be revealed and analyzed. At the end of the chapter, some conclusions will be presented concerning the relation between the case findings and the formulated hypotheses (4.4).

## 4.1 THE DUO-CENTRIC CITY REGION OF ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN

All municipalities taking part in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen (except the municipality of Mook en Middelaar) lie within the administrative borders of the Gelderland province. The economic profile of the region reflects economic differences between its cities and rural areas. Nijmegen is a university city characterized by its knowledge industry and health services. Arnhem is an employment hub for governmental and business services. Together with smaller towns and rural areas, the region offers a series of cultural and tourist services. The rivers Waal and Rijn, which split the region, form a physical barrier between the two urban agglomerations. The duo-centricity of the region and the emergence of two major conurbations around its two large cities have brought some cultural differences as well. Arnhem, at the north of the two rivers, is since medieval times the residence place of Protestant communities while Nijmegen has traditionally played host to a large Catholic community.

Figure 4.1: Selected municipalities in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen



The geographical division between the two religious groups, together with the partition created by the two rivers, has traditionally seen an uncoordinated expansion of the two cities further away from each other (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.19). However, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a shift took place in the orientation of the two cities as they guided their expansion towards each other. The geographical expansion of the cities towards (and beyond) the rivers stimulated cooperation between the regional municipalities. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cooperation got an official status and its own administrative apparatus for coordinating inter-municipal cooperation. In the Fifth National Memorandum for Spatial Planning and later in the Memorandum ‘Space’ (*Ruimte*), Arnhem-Nijmegen has got the status of a National Urban Network for which integral spatial economic development would be encouraged (Ministerie VROM et al. 2006a p.155).

#### **4.1.1 Background and initiation of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen**

The Arnhem-Nijmegen RCA is a statutory organization that originated from earlier non-legislative practice. Before receiving its present legal status as Joint Provision Act Plus (*Wet gemeenschappelijke regeling plus – WGR-plus*), the regional municipalities already cooperated in spatial planning, mobility and economic development under the temporarily Changing Governance Framework Law of 1994 (*Kaderwet Bestuur in Verandering*). The central government played a role in driving cooperation initiatives. In 1984, the government produced a memorandum ‘Administrative Organization’ (*Nota Bestuurlijke Organisatie*), encouraging regional cooperation between major cities and their hinterlands. Later, in 1994, it introduced the Changing Governance Framework Law (*Kaderwet Bestuur in Verandering*). That was a temporary law that compelled municipalities in seven regions to cooperate in spatial economic matters. The region of Arnhem-Nijmegen was one of the regions where the law was introduced. This special temporary legislation was supposed to prepare the introduction of a permanently elected regional government – the city province of Arnhem-Nijmegen.

During the 1990s, however, the idea to create an elected regional government has been abandoned. Instead, the central government extended the 1994 temporary law that compelled inter-municipal collaboration. In 2006 the designated seven regions got a permanent legal status (*WGR-plus*) and their regional administrative institutions received enhanced competences to produce regional schemes in the policy fields of transport & mobility, housing, economic development and spatial planning (see 1.3 for general review of that matter in the Netherlands). However, even at the end of the decade, the search for favorable ways of governing the designated seven city regions still occupies the central government. At the beginning of 2008, the Ladders commission, which investigated the practice of regional governance in the Netherlands, recommended reducing financial allocative competencies of Arnhem-Nijmegen and other city regions located outside the Randstad (Ministerie BZ 2008 p.36). Whether these recommendations will be adopted by the government depends on the special evaluation to be conducted in 2009.

### **4.1.2 Organization**

As a *WGR-plus* region, the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen consists of a Regional Council (*Algemeen Bestuur*) and a Board of Governors (*College van Bestuur*). The 37 representatives of the council and the 5 members of the governors' board are all active members of the local councils or function as aldermen/mayors in one of the 20 municipalities participating in the city region. The municipalities send their representatives to the regional council and elect the regional board of governors. This board reflects the political electoral division in the region (as reflected in the municipal elections) and the geographical spread of the participating municipalities: Two positions in the board go to mayors or council members from Arnhem and Nijmegen. Two other positions are reserved to mayors or aldermen from the smaller municipalities in the region.

An external chairman appointed by the regional council stands at the head of the board of governors. The chairman thus is the only governor who has no parallel local tasks next to his regional portfolio. About 30 civil servants support the activities of the governors in the city region and prepare any regional consultations. The regional council gathers every two months. Decisions are made by majority vote. Municipalities are represented in the regional council in proportion to their population, however, it should be noted that Arnhem and Nijmegen's votes carry twice the weight of the votes of the rest of the regional council's members (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007b, Article 16). Still, with 37 members in the regional council, the two larger cities cannot form a majority without the support of smaller municipalities.

The city region has three advisory commissions: mobility and economy; spatial planning and housing, and administration & finance. Most of the responsibilities of the city region lie in the field of transport and infrastructure (ibid. p.37). The budget (about €75 million in 2006) comes primarily from central government and is mostly reserved for transport and infrastructure projects. Less than 5% of the regional budget comes from the annual contribution of the participating municipalities, which contribute in relation to the size of their population (€3.15 per resident in 2008).

### **4.1.3 Regional strategic output**

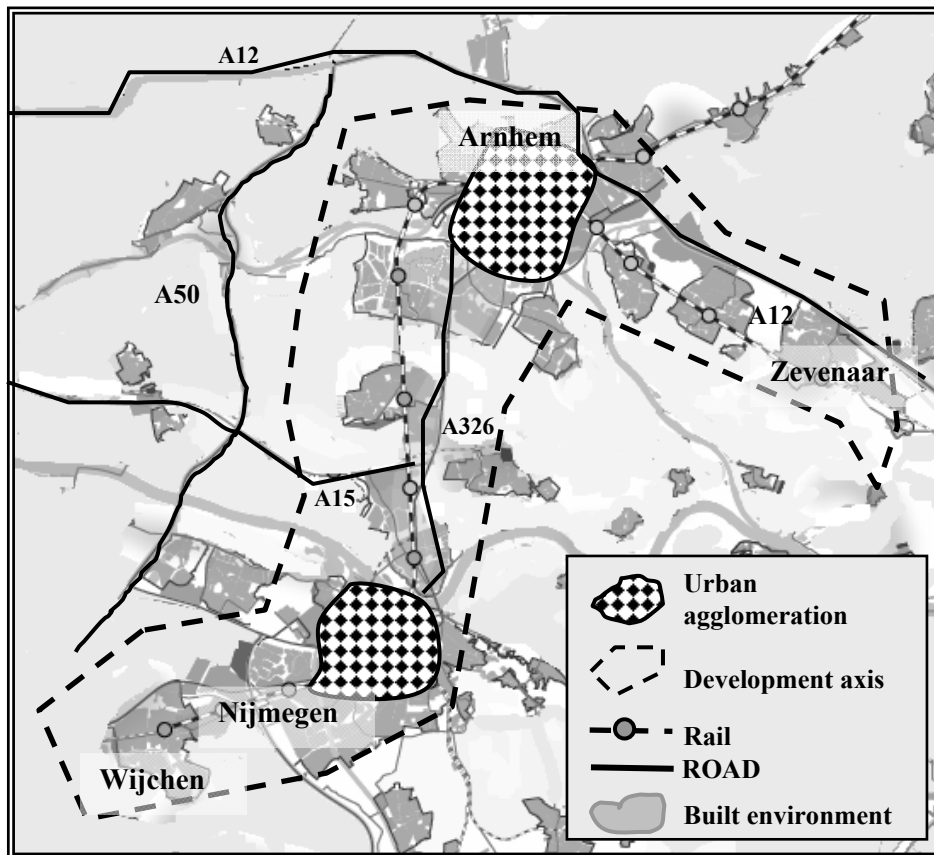
In 2006, City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen has produced a regional plan for the year 2020, in which it defines development principles and regional priorities. This plan followed an earlier plan produced in 1996, prior to the *WGR-plus* status granted to the city region and the related financial and juridical competences. The plan for 2020 specified 10 priorities the city region wished to promote within the policy fields of work and accessibility; transport and transit-node development; landscape and recreation, and housing (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.41-45):

1. Improve connections to the European infrastructure network
2. Integrate buses and trains into a coherent regional network
3. Concentrate urban development around several multi-modal transport nodes

4. Restructure existing industrial terrains and the road network
5. Reserve space for innovation and the creative/knowledge/health industry
6. Strengthen the urban climate of Arnhem and Nijmegen
7. Develop identity and preserve the character of rural centers
8. Create regional landscape park and a network of recreational routes
9. Improve quality of nature
10. Accentuate cultural-historical relics and monuments

Figure 4.2 presents the major infrastructural and spatial interventions as summarized from the Regional Plan 2020 (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a) and the master-plan for public transport (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008b).

Figure 4.2: Strategic development axis of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen



Based on the Regional Plan 2020, more specified thematic plans were produced for specific policy fields:

### *I. Spatial Planning and Housing*

The plan embraced the idea of concentrating future development within the ‘S’ shaped curve stretching from Zevenaar in the north-east of the region, via Arnhem and Nijmegen, towards Wijchen in the south-west. By concentrating future development along this curve, the city region officially adopted the ongoing shift in expansion patterns and the development of two agglomerations toward each other. The 2020 plan designated the rural cores between Arnhem and Nijmegen as the areas to accommodate future regional development (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.99).

Together with the Ministry of Spatial Planning, the city region launched a special program to accommodate the construction of 25,000 new houses by 2009 (ibid.). The ministry determined the amount of houses required for meeting the demand but the realization and coordination of the construction was held by the municipalities. The ministry reserved €52 million as a performance subsidy to be granted if and when the municipalities delivered the dwellings (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2004 article 1). Hoping to secure the funds, the city region appointed external professionals to head up a special platform (“Tempo Kan”) to monitor and coordinate the realization of the 25,000 houses on time and to promote regional price differentiation between affordable and expensive housing. In order to reduce the existing concentration of cheap houses in the larger cities the city region agreed that at least 50% of the new houses in the smaller municipalities would be in the affordable price category compared to 35% in Arnhem and Nijmegen (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2005). Parallel to the monitoring of regional housing construction, the city region designated 1,250 hectares of rural land for the creation of ‘Lingezege Regional Park’ as a buffer zone between the areas designated for housing (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.43).

### *II. Economic development*

The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen defined in its regional economic plan five clusters as regional anchors for future development and regional investments (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008a). The clusters designated for regional promotion were: “fashion and design”, “energy and green-housing”, “technology and innovation”, “tourism” and “health services”. “Transport and Logistics”, a sixth cluster which had a strong lobby within the region, was not explicitly designated as a regional leading cluster but was acknowledged as a broader condition for supporting the regional economy (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008a p.29).

During the composition of the economic plan, the city region consulted representatives of the private sector. The city region also approached educational institutions in the region in an attempt to adjust their education programs to the regional economic plan and to improve the synergy between research, education and the region’s economic

profile. The regional economic plan designated future industrial zones along major highways. It designated the A12 highway as an axis where international companies would concentrate. ‘Lower profile’ companies would converge along the highways A15 and A73. Initial attempts to achieve comparable differentiation with retail supply in the region turned to be less successful. The plans to create new shopping center along the A325 brought the administration of the city region to try and increase the level of complementariness of assortments between the new center and the existing ones in Arnhem and Nijmegen (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.129). These attempts, however, did not lead to agreements between the relevant municipalities with regard to their local retail policies.

An additional campaign relating to the regional economy was launched by the city region to promote itself abroad. The RCA, in cooperation with employers’ organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and local/regional educational institutes developed a joint region branding plan (“Cool Region”) aiming to improve the city region’s attractiveness globally. In the plan, local education institutions would collaborate with regional industry to attract (foreign) investments, students and new companies to the region.

### *III. Transport and mobility*

Prior to the composition of the Regional Plan 2020, some preparations took place in the form of studies and quick scan analyses. These studies provided better insight in the actual functional relations and hierarchies between accessibility conditions and the spatial economic geography and revealed the shortcomings of certain networks (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2006). The analysis served as a basis for the development of the regional master plan for public transport which has been approved by the regional council in 2008. Concentrating future spatial developments around multimodal transit nodes, the master plan supplied several measures to improve accessibility along the ‘S’ shaped development axis Zevenaar-Arnhem-Nijmegen-Wijchen. The constant growth of the municipalities located between the rivers and the major cities brought the city region to initiate a new rapid public transport system. This project would form a new axis of public transport that would connect the center of Nijmegen with Bemmel, Huissen, Kronenburg, IJsseloord and Arnhem (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen, 2007c, 2008b).

In order to improve international accessibility, the city region agreed to join an effort to complete the ‘Delta-line’ – a high speed train connection between Germany, Arnhem and the Randstad (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a p.79). To increase comparable international accessibility by car, the city region lobbied for the extension of the A15 highway eastwards towards the A12. This extension, according to the policy makers, would improve accessibility to the eastern border with Germany, and ease congestion on the A12 between Arnhem and Doetinchem. The final key infrastructure project the city region promoted was the construction of a second bridge across the Waal river to connect the western part of Nijmegen with the A325 highway (ibid.). The city region launched some non-infrastructure mobility projects as well. With the project “Better



Accessibility is possible” (*Beter bereikbaar KAN*) it hoped to influence commuting patterns and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport to reduce road congestion within major transport paths. The central government, together with the city region, stimulated local companies to introduce transport management arrangements among employees, aiming to reduce car usage during rush hours.

## **4.2 THE STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF THE CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN**

The first hypothesis of the research has assumed that voluntary RCAs will show limited strategic capacity compared to formal RCAs in which the collaboration or the production of regional policy is compulsory. The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen belongs to the second type of RCA as it has an official legal status and formal competences backed up by juridical/financial instruments to execute its policies. The city region is not as completely dependent on the goodwill of different partners as voluntary RCAs may be, and a majority of collaborating municipalities can impose its decision upon the opposition by vote. This should increase the RCA’s strategic capacity, according the first hypothesis. If the hypothesis concerning the shortcomings of voluntary collaboration is correct, then the existence of an official regional council like in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen can promote the production of clear and sharp strategies upon which projects will be coherently combined and implemented. For an evaluation of the strategic capacity of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, its strategic output will be set against the three strategic components of the strategic capacity model: reception, consolidation and realization.

### **4.2.1 Reception**

Diffusing relevant knowledge within the RCA helps define adequate strategies and the potential to exploit synergies using available resources. However, this is dependent on the variety and the intensity with which relevant stakeholders are involved in the strategic formation process. With governmental, private or third sector stakeholders participating in the RCA, the likelihood of receiving a complete insight over interests, resources, and opportunities through which strategic alliances can be formed and molded would rise.

#### *1. Local and regional governments*

All 20 municipalities collaborating within the Arnhem-Nijmegen city region are represented in the regional council. All are involved in regional consultations and approval procedures for spatial economic policies. The city region has no official policy concerning expansion and involvement of new neighboring municipalities. Yet the inclusion of new municipalities into the city region is legally possible.

## *II. Neighboring regional governments*

Arnhem-Nijmegen has no regular bilateral consultations with neighboring regions or cities. There are occasional visits of regional officials to the neighboring cities in Germany and occasional consultations with the neighboring RCA consisting of the municipalities Wageningen, Ede, Rhenen and Veenendaal (*WGR WERV*) do take place. The city region shares an office of lobbyists in Brussels together with other RCAs like BrabantStad, South Limburg and Twente.

## *III. Higher tiers of government*

Higher governmental tiers like provinces or ministries may play an active part in the consultations taking place within the RCA. In the case of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, such involvement is only partly present. Even though almost all municipalities collaborating in the city region are part of the province of Gelderland, the province itself does not participate in the consultations of the city region. Even though Gelderland has some competences and financial instruments for executing spatial economic policies, its interaction and cooperation with the city region is limited. The Ministries of Spatial Planning and Transport conduct direct communication with the city region using regional account managers who promote ministerial policies in the regions and coordinate between the various levels of government. Since 2008, the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Transport and Spatial Planning have amalgamated their projects in a single integrated investment program (MIRT) in an attempt to integrate their regional investments. Within the framework of the MIRT program, representatives of the ministries regularly meet representatives of the city region in an attempt to create a better fit between ministerial policies, regional needs and central governmental investments.

## *IV. Private sector and societal organizations*

The city region interacts closely with the regional branch of the Chamber of Commerce and regional employers' representatives such as the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW). The involvement of these organizations, however, is limited to economic themes (e.g. the availability of a sufficiently qualified workforce in the region and the definition of regional clusters for public investments). Representatives of the private sector have taken an active role in analyzing trends, defining regional clusters and generating related projects during the composition of the economic plan for the region (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008a). However, in other policy fields like mobility and housing, the involvement of the private sector in strategic consultation has been limited. Two exceptions were the tight cooperation between representatives of regional entrepreneurs and the city region in an attempt to limit car usage among employees and the introduction of a joint program to regulate the travel habits of workers in the region. Representatives of the private sector used the communication channels with the city region in order to give the regional politicians

relevant information concerning the priorities and insights of the private sector regarding areas such as education, expat housing preferences and regional marketing.

Non-governmental stakeholders were actively involved during the composition of the joint program for increasing the availability of adequate skilled workers in the region. Within this program, knowledge institutions like the Arnhem-Nijmegen College and the Radboud University in Nijmegen engaged in the regional economic agenda and adjusted their curricula to the regional needs. During the composition of the public transport strategy for the region, the city region consulted some NGOs (like passengers organization ROVER). Strikingly, the private was not as strongly involved with the urgent theme of the realization of 25,000 houses by the year 2010 as it was during the production of the regional economic agenda. In ‘Tempo KAN’, the project initiated by the city region to accelerate the realization of the new houses before 2010, the housing corporations responsible for the construction of the units were hardly involved.

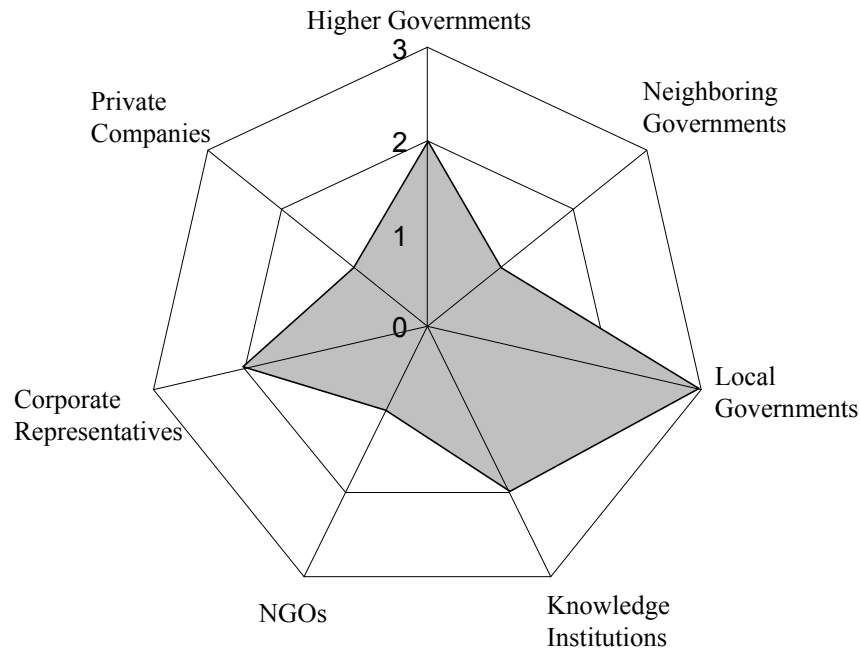
#### *V. The strategic compass of City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen*

Figure 4.3 provides a visual illustration of the available channels for knowledge-diffusion in the city region. The predominance of the regional municipalities (local governments) that function as RCA members is evident. Relatively strong is also the affinity to higher governmental tiers, especially the ministries of Transport, Spatial Planning and Economic Affairs that produce their own policies for the region. However, the rather distanced position of Gelderland province reduces the total connectivity to higher governments in the strategic compass. Although in the private sector, corporate representatives continuously consult with the city region on strategic themes, NGOs and individual companies are only incidentally involved in specific components of the regional strategic forming.

#### *VI. Multiplicity of collaborative policy fields*

Apart from the review of stakeholders involved in the RCA’s collective effort to produce regional strategies, the multiplicity of policy fields discussed within the RCA is another important indicator of knowledge availability. The Regional Plan 2020 and the derived policy themes that followed involved a variety of areas eligible for collaboration. These included economic development, regional housing, mobility and spatial planning. Because of the variety of policy fields the city region was involved with, there was potential for cross-sectoral connections and enhanced fit between different policy fields. A mixture of policy fields offered the potential to produce coherent and integrated regional strategies by the RCA. The degree to which these potentials were actually exploited will be revealed during the analysis of the ‘consolidation’ component of the regional strategic capacity (4.2.2).

Figure 4.3: Strategic compass City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen (0= No Participation, 1= Incidental participation, 2= Enduring participation, 3= Permanent participation)



#### **4.2.2 Consolidation**

The involvement of a rich spectrum of stakeholders from various policy fields is not the only component considered indispensable for competitive strategic planning. Equally crucial is the collective capacity of the stakeholders to designate competitive strategies, decide upon collective actions and choose between potential alternatives. The second component of the regional strategic capacity refers both to the ability to demonstrate selectivity and the ability to produce a coherent series of different activities and projects by the collaborating parties.

##### *1. Content-based strategy, selectivity, and internal fit*

Respondents from the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen described during interviews a shift in the strategic approach of the RCA in recent years. This shift concerned the preference within the RCA to concentrate regional investments in a limited number of

larger projects rather than spreading investments among many local ones. Bundling investments for the promotion of a limited number of projects necessitated a stronger capacity to mobilize available resources. At the same time, however, the concentration of effort increased the internal fit and the impact of the strategic projects.

Creating an axis along which spatial and economic development could be concentrated was one of the results of the selective approach. The axis connected the two larger cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen with their hinterland into an 'S'-shaped development curve (see figure 4.2). Along this curve, most of the future collective investments were planned (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2007a). Traces for the preference to concentrate investment in a limited number of selected projects were found in sectoral policies as well. In transport and infrastructure policies (where the RCA had relatively more policy competences), the city region chose a limited number of projects to lobby for when negotiating with the central government. Those projects included the expansion of the highways A50, A12 and A15, the construction of a new bridge for Nijmegen, and the promotion of a rapid transport system to connect Nijmegen and Arnhem via the growing rural municipalities between them.

Defining the 'S' shaped development curve served as a base for the coordination of functional differentiation along it. The five regional economic clusters defined in the economic plan (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008a) found a strong geographical distributive expression: the clusters of "fashion & design" and "technology & innovation" were mostly concentrated in Arnhem; with "health services" and "energy and glass cultivation" placed around Nijmegen (and the villages to the north). One of the respondents revealed the regional ambition when composing the economic agenda: *"We wanted to define the clusters that really distinguish us from other regions. Cities can strengthen each other and profit from each other's qualities"* (Respondent from the Chamber of Commerce).

Defining the clusters was not only an expression of identifying and exploiting regional relative advantages but also key for the promotion of synergies between the cities and the arrangement of their interrelated autonomous activities. The differentiation between the area along the A12 for international companies and heavy industry (Duiven), and the areas along the A15 and the A73 for companies with more limited distributive area, showed another expression of selectivity and regional differentiation capacity. By concentrating industry along the highway, the city region aimed to shift heavy traffic away from the centers of the larger cities. Creating comparable spatial differentiation for regional retail stores in the region appeared to be harder to achieve. Initial attempts to coordinate an assortment of retail stores in the larger cities and along the A325 did not come to fruition and the eventual spread of the assortment was the result of autonomous local dynamics.

In housing policies, the city region showed substantial selectivity. Together with the municipalities, the city region defined the contours of future expansion of the built environment. Municipalities were free to realize as many houses they wished within those contours so long as 50% of new housing units fell under an affordable price

category. More concrete regional spatial plans to guide the regional distribution of housing (total required, accessibility consideration, etc.) were not regionally produced. Some respondents revealed that the lack of a housing distribution plan led to limited differentiation between the housing types.

It is surely worth mentioning that respondents from the city region, municipalities and the private sector all emphasized the importance they attributed to regional selectivity. Respondents considered selectivity and concentration of collective effort as preconditions for efficiently lobbying the central government while competing for investments with larger cities from the Randstad.

## *II. Conflicts, their impact and resolution mechanisms*

During the composition of the Regional Plan 2020, and the policy documents reviewed in this chapter, some differences between municipalities became apparent. These disagreements led occasionally to the postponement of decisions or, worse, to their total avoidance. Differences occurred during the initial planning of the new rapid public transport system connecting Arnhem and Nijmegen via the smaller municipalities located east of the existing train tracks. The initial idea was to realize the rapid transport system using regional networks of trams as have been already planned in Nijmegen. Arnhem, which uses trolley busses in its own local network, insisted that any future regional connection would be based on the technology already used in its own network. This technical issue was not settled within the city region, a fact that led to several delays in the planning process (de Gelderlander 2008b). The immediate consequence of the delays in decision-making was that the central government did not reserve any budget for the co-financing of this system in its annual MIRT budgetary expenses (Ministerie V&W et al. 2008a, 2008b). Another content-based difference occurred during the composition of the regional economic plan. In the process of designating economic clusters for enhanced future regional investments, smaller municipalities and local companies lobbied for the inclusion of the clusters transport & logistics and greenhouse industries in the economic program. Since the city region was reluctant to include too many clusters in the economic plan, it rejected this demand. Instead, the city region considered the two clusters as ‘sub-clusters’ which helped to strengthen the regional economy as a whole (Stadsregio Arnhem-Nijmegen 2008a p.29).

In general, respondents from the city region administration and the different municipalities appeared not to feel discouraged or intimidated by local or intra-regional conflicts. Although a certain level of tension or conflict seemed to occur, the level was such that it never threatened to jeopardize the whole collaboration. Besides, as one respondent pointed out, *“Conflicts belong to the process. If you don’t have conflicts than you have a weak plan that does not say much and avoid difficult choices and debates”*.

### 4.2.3 Realization

According to the chairman of the Arnhem-Nijmegen city region, “*What is even more important than the plan are the projects that you need to make the plan work*”.

The strategic choices and the agreement over policies and projects achieved by the collaborating parties must find their way towards realization in order to meet the objectives of the third component of the strategic model. As the physical realization of decisions might often require several years, in the context of the conducted cases the focus will lie on the (official) commitments of parties to carry out agreements and to reserve budgets for the implementation of relevant projects. The regional strategic output produced a list of projects the regional parties wished to promote by lobbying external parties and by autonomously processing the projects towards implementation. In 2007, the central government fused its inter-ministerial investments in an integrated program (MIRT). The central government acknowledged many of the strategic decisions of the city region and integrated some of the regional projects in its MIRT program for direct realization or for further elaboration and study. Table 4.1 specifies the projects that the central government incorporated in its integrated financing program.

The relative success of the city region in bringing the ministries to commit to the projects (either by co-financing or further studying) suggests promising signals regarding the realization potential of those projects. As mentioned in the previous section, the rapid public transport connection between the larger cities did not appear in the MIRT list of projects neither for 2008 nor for 2009. Respondents revealed that the project needed to be further consolidated within the RCA itself (internal agreement over the project’s necessity and over transport mode to be used) in order to be acknowledged and co-financed by the central government (De Gelderlander 2008b).

Table 4.1: MIRT projects in City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen (based on Ministerie V&W et al. 2008a)

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PHASE	FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION/PLANNING
ARNHEM CENTRAL STATION	Expansion of Arnhem CS	Realization	€102m. from Ministries of Transport and Spatial Planning
4 <sup>th</sup> PLATFORM	Expansion of the station’s capacity	Realization	€35.7m from Ministry of Transport

Tabel 4.1 cont.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PHASE	FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION/PLANNING
ARNHEM WEST FREE CROSSING	Crossing of the train rails in order to enable simultaneous movement of trains from/to Utrecht and Nijmegen	Realization	€230m from Ministry of Transport
EXTENSION A15	Extension of the highway towards the A12 (Zevenaar)	Planning	€375m reserved by the Ministry of Transport and €112.5m by the city region
EXPANSION A12 EDE-GRIJSOORD	Expansion of the A12 from both sides of Arnhem to improve accessibility by car	Planning	€124m from Ministry of Transport (MIRT 2009)
INDUSTRIAL TERRAIN A15 ZONE	Creation of a new industrial zone	Study	Ministry of Economic Affairs
INDUSTRIAL TERRAIN A12 ZONE	Renewing of the industrial zone	Study	Ministry of Economic Affairs
RURAL DEVELOPING AREA BERGERDEN	Greenhouse development	Study	Ministry of Agriculture and Nature
NIJMEGEN'S EXPANSION TO OTHER BANK OF THE WAAL	Integrated area development, including new residential neighborhood (citadel) and river front	Study	Ministry of Transport



Table 4.1 cont.

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PHASE	FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION/PLANNING
2 <sup>ND</sup> CITY BRIDGE NIJMEGEN	Connection of two sides of the Waal	Realization	€160m Ministry of Transport €30m province €10m city region €60m Nijmegen
EXPANSION A50	Between Ewijk and Waalburg	Study	Ministry of Transport
DEVELOPING AREA A73	Ewijk Rijkevoort	Study	Ministry of Transport
INDUSTRIAL ZONE WEST KANAAL DIJK	Renewing of existing industrial zone.	Planning	€2.5m Ministry of Economic Affairs

Less successful was the production of 50% affordable houses per municipality. Not all municipalities have achieved that proportion so far. The city region was not able to convince or help some small municipalities to stick to the agreed target. One of the respondents revealed that the mayors of these municipalities had been asked to report to the minister of spatial planning and explain why their municipalities missed the target.

Despite the encouraging signs with regard to the realization of the total required number of houses, some of the respondents were worried about the full realization of projects initiated by the RCA. Since many of the projects have yet to reach the realization phase, concerns were based on “feelings” rather than hard evidence. Skeptical respondents, often from the municipalities, based their reservations on what that they felt was a growing gap between the city region and the municipalities it serves. Some respondents revealed that the municipalities charged with implementing regional policy do not always share the strategic lines drawn by the city region. *“There are not enough open communication channels between the city region and the municipalities. The representatives in the city region govern at regional level with limited linkage to the city councils. It leads to decreased implementation capacities and it limits the perspectives for realization. If the connection between the city region and the municipalities was stronger, plans of the city region would have been realized earlier”* (Official from a larger municipality).

#### **4.2.4 The strategic capacity of a non voluntary RCA**

The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen is a mandatory RCA in which parties are obliged by law to cooperate and produce collective regional plans. The analysis of the previous sections shows that the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen demonstrated substantial strategic capacity. It produced a series of interrelated strategies while interacting closely with external parties like ministries and representatives of the private sector. Even though most of the strategies and their projects did not get into the actual realization phase by the time of writing, many of them have been approved and budgeted for. In specific major projects, however, like the rapid public transport system and the regional park Lingezege, some doubts were raised regarding the potentials for successful realization. Respondents from the Ministry of Spatial Planning complimented the city region for its capacity to engage the central government to its projects. They also praised its ability to assemble its collective efforts and attract investments for a selected number of larger projects rather than spreads investments on a multitude of smaller ones. Respondents from the private sector also seemed to appreciate the activities and the achievements of the city region.

When respondents were asked to reflect on the compulsory character of the regional collaboration and its strategic capacity, the alleged positive relation between the two did not receive clear confirmation. Some doubted there was a relation between compulsory collaboration and collective strategic capacities. For example, respondents from the Ministry of Spatial Planning contended that some voluntary RCAs in the Netherlands actually do better than compulsory ones, and vice versa. Respondents from the participating municipalities and the administration of the city region, however, did believe that the legal status of the RCA increased the quality of its collaboration. They considered the statutory setting of a regional council and the compulsory task to cooperate as an important framework for the production of coherent regional plans. Some even lamented that the city region has no comparable competences in other policy fields. The official statutory character of the RCA was seen by these respondents as advantageous for the production of a sound and unified voice towards the central government, the EU and the private market. They shared the belief that the imperative character of the RCA contributed to the provision of a structured collaborative practice that ensured that parties will be present during consultation rounds and continuously informed.

However, many respondents warned that the beneficial impact of the legal status of the city region should not be overestimated as the legal status was not sufficient for the production of meaningful collective strategic output. Respondents from the participating municipalities pointed out the need to create enthusiasm over the collaboration. The official competences and the budget of the RCA could be used to stimulate collaboration, but alone, these would not be sufficient to create enthusiasm and a genuine collaborative attitude between participants. Indeed, as civil servants of the city region administration recognized, the resources of the RCA created temporary unity but after a few allocation rounds of the available budget municipalities

occasionally lost interest in each other and retreated to a rather introverted behavior pattern. The compulsion to cooperate in the city region was not conceived as a mechanism that necessarily increased solidarity among municipalities as *“the passion to collaborate for each other’s causes and for the collective regional benefits is still absent in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen”* (Official from one of the municipalities).

All respondents were reluctant to expand the legislative competences of the city region. Rather than improve collaboration through legislative amendments, most respondents argued that a change of attitude in local leadership along with the way actors interact with each other would achieve a much better effect. Respondents from the municipalities were therefore against increasing official competences of the city region for the sake of improved strategic capacity. They claimed that the RCA is already *‘too institutionalized’* and that it already has features of an autonomous entity barely linked to the municipalities that compose it. Respondents from both large and small municipalities shared the concern regarding the emergence of the RCA as an unelected autonomous organization that produces its own policies and controls its own budget for its realization. Respondents warned that the concentration of more competences by the city region would reduce the likelihood of realizing the projects. They claimed municipalities would be in that case less cooperative. Indeed, the trend of the RCA appearing *“distant”* from the municipalities already seemed embedded. Many of the respondents felt that the city region and its governing board are losing their affinity with the municipalities and the local councils they are supposed to serve. They feared such disconnection would affect project realization: *“You see often that regional governors or the chairman of the city region generate projects but they forget to inform and recruit the municipalities with them. Municipalities find themselves under time pressure and instead of participating in and initiating projects themselves, they are trying to catch up with the tempo of decision-making made by the city region”* (Civil servant from a large municipality).

City region officials were aware of these critical voices. Some of them divulged that occasionally, uncoordinated ad hoc activities or immediate responses are required from the RCA when interacting with external parties like the central government. These types of interaction with external actors made constant involvement of all parties within the city region awkward, they said. But not all of the city region’s respondents accepted the criticism portraying it as an autonomous body. Some claimed that as it represents twenty municipalities the RCA should be able to negotiate with external parties and promote its own policies. Some of the governors of the city region explicitly expressed their contentment with the vibrant and dynamic attitude of the RCA and its tendency not to let hesitating municipalities delay the regional dynamics and the tempo of regional strategic production.

The unique legal status of the city region and the imperative among municipalities to collaborate appeared to have some positive impact on the collaboration but the respondents did not consider it as a main condition for achieving high strategic capacity. As one of the civil servants put it, *“Within the regional collaboration you expect commitment from each other because parties subscribe to the content and the*

*ideas that come out of the collaboration. If you need the law for this, it is a problem”* (Civil servant from the city region). All respondents clearly emphasized that the juridical and financial resources the city region possessed helped to create the collaborative framework by stimulating and regulating the collaboration. These resources, however, were perceived as inferior to a situation in which partners truly bought into the collective vision out of sheer conviction rather than the carrot of financial gain or the stick of a legal requirement.

Most respondents also rejected the suggested trade-off between RCA size and strategic output. Even though some believed the formation process with 20 municipalities and multiple actors in tow was exhaustive, most of them did not consider that a limiting factor for producing coherent strategic output. A few voices suggested limiting the number of municipalities collaborating within the RCA, claiming it would accelerate the speed in which decisions would be made, but not necessarily the eventual quality of the strategic output.

### **4.3 POWER AND THE STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF THE CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN**

The three hypotheses regarding the influence of power on regional strategic capacity postulate that power external to the collaborating group, power concentrated within the group and the collective power of the group itself may have positive impact on the collaboration and the achieved strategic capacity of RCAs.

#### **4.3.1 External power and its impact on the regional collaboration**

*“A metaphor: The script-writer, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, submitted a screenplay: the housing covenant. The actors of the play, the municipalities and the housing corporations, need to bring this play to a good ending. It is the task of the director, the regional construction director, to get the best out of the actors. If they manage, the actors receive applause from Minister Dekker (the Minister of Spatial Planning) and she grants money”* (Tempo Kan 2007).

##### *I. The central government and the city region*

To a certain extent, the Arnhem-Nijmegen RCA is the product of the national government, which introduced the law that led to the initiation of City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen and regulated its practice (see 4.1.1). Furthermore, the central government appeared to stimulate all three components of the city region’s strategic capacity. It raised the level of involvement of actors in the RCA (reception), it stimulated selectivity and internal fit within the collective output (consolidation), and it contributed to its realization. The central government encouraged stakeholders to participate in the RCA by linking its financial support for regional projects to certain

requirements regarding private sector involvement. The Ministry of Transport conditioned its financial contribution for infrastructure projects with the joint regional efforts between the city region and regional private companies to reduce car usage by commuters. A similar stimulant came from the Ministry of Spatial Planning; with its concept for integrated area development (*Integrale Gebiedsontwikkeling*) it wished to encourage local government to actively make the most of the integrated area together with private investors (Kennis Centrum PPS 2003, VROM 2006b).

The ministries themselves, using their financial resources as a bargaining tool, contributed to the generation of ideas within the city region during consultations regarding strategic projects and investments. One of the regional respondents revealed that the idea of the rapid public transport system between Arnhem and Nijmegen emerged while consulting with the Ministry of Transport over what was initially planned as a small-scale rapid system for Nijmegen and its immediate surroundings. Representatives of the ministry encouraged the regional parties to expand the local system to a regional scale by linking extended central governmental financial support if the project took on a regional character. The use of financial and juridical resources by the ministries encouraged RCA members to concentrate efforts behind a selected number of projects that enjoyed a high level of coherency. In an attempt to integrate different spatial investments, the central government fused the programs of the transport, spatial planning and economic affairs ministries into a single program of projects slated for central government support in 2007. The “Long Term Program for Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Transport (*Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur, Ruimte en Transport – MIRT*) was supposed to improve inter-ministerial coordination and increase coherency between transport policies and spatial development (Kennisinstituut voor mobiliteitsbeleid 2008 p.39). The central government’s drive for integration and inter-sectoral coherency stimulated the RCA to unite behind a limited number of strategic projects in order to have projects included in the central government’s MIRT lists. The existence of MIRT stimulated the city region to compose a convincing narrative to which they could link the collaborating municipalities. One of the governors of the city region disclosed; *“I cannot go to the minister before we achieve a regional agreement. If we do not agree within our region where investments are mostly required then the central government does nothing. I use that fact. I use the external parties, private sector or the central government to spur the municipalities to reach an agreement. You use the central government and the enticement of its co-financing among the regional partners in order to get everybody in the region on the same page.”*

The contribution of the different ministries for achieving higher strategic capacity did not skip its last component – realization. The role of the central government in bringing regional strategies to realization proved indispensable. Many regional projects found their way into the MIRT investment program (table 4.1). The subsidies of €52m granted by the Ministry of Spatial Planning for the realization of almost 25,000 houses by 2010 was another expression of the central government’s contribution. However, respondents from the city region often criticized the central government, claiming its contribution for high strategic capacity was not always evident. Indeed, they argued the

influence of the central government was often too dominant. Some respondents claimed that while the central government preached decentralization in its national policies (Ministerie VROM et al. 2006), it was still reluctant to delegate responsibilities to the regions. Furthermore, critics believed that the central government's regional policies did not meet actual regional needs. This criticism came despite the fact the ministries of spatial planning and transport do have their own regional account managers who advise RCAs and coordinate the cooperation efforts.

Other criticisms of the central government concerned the unsatisfactory level of integration of the central government itself. Although the ministries officially emphasized the importance of integrated area development and composed integrated investment programs like MIRT, respondents charged that the central government's ministries failed to implement the same principles they preached. The dominating sectoral approach of the ministries, according to respondents, hindered integration between regional projects submitted for central governmental support. As one of the respondents put it, *"sometimes the municipalities or the city region do not know on which horse they should gamble. They begin to doubt, where does the money comes from? Do we need to be friends with the Ministry of Transport and submit our mobility plans to them, or do we need to submit our complete integral vision, including the mobility component, to the Ministry of Spatial Planning"* (Official from one of the larger municipalities).

Respondents also blamed the central government for inconsistency with regard to its official position towards the legal status of the RCA. In 2008, the Ladders commission advised the central government to reduce the financial competencies of city regions (*WGR-plus*) operating outside the Randstad (Ministerie van BZ 2008 p.36). This advice was part of a long debate regarding the optimal design of regional administration in The Netherlands and the role city regions may have in realizing it. Respondents suggested that when the central government radiated doubts concerning the future of the city region it had a weakening influence. Inconsistency in the way the central government treated the city region and its official competencies encouraged municipalities to look for other collaborative practices with actors that appeared more stable and robust; *"The doubt over the future of the city region and the potential reduction of its competences is bothersome. The province uses the recommendation of the Ladders commission to signal the municipalities that it is safer to cooperate with it rather than with the city region. If we, the municipalities, put all our cards on a weakening city region, than we lose the partnership with the province. The inconsistency of the central government concerning the position of the city regions undermines the cooperation within it"* (Official from one of the municipalities).

## *II. The Gelderland province and the city region*

The critical quote above reveals what many of the respondents defined as the *"troublesome"* relation between the RCA and Gelderland province. Even though the province contributed financially to many of the regional projects generated by the city region, it remained an external party that maintained tense relations with the RCA. All

respondents agreed that the official competences granted to the city region from the central government, in one of the province's most dynamic areas, raised tension, rivalry and mutual suspicion between the two regional authorities. The province supervised the spatial development and officially approved municipal land use schemes and the financial flows of the municipalities within its territory. As a large shareholder in an energy company (Nuon) the province had enjoyed great financial revenues in recent years and was considered one of the richest provinces in the Netherlands. Many respondents of the collaborating municipalities and the city region regretted that cooperation with the province was under-exploited. They believed better collaboration could have enhanced the impact of collective lobbying towards the central government and would have accelerated the realization of projects.

The poor relations between the province and the city region raised a gloomy picture that left little hope for engaging provincial resources in regional enterprises. Mistrust, rivalry, jealousy and other destructive feelings characterized the relations between governors and civil servants of the province and these of the city region. A selection of several quotes made by respondents may illustrate the poisonous relations between the two regional bodies: *"The province turns its back to the city region"; "The province strives to abolish the city region"; "The governor of the province stabs the city region in the back"; "the province considers the city region as a threat"; "the province, with its money and power controls and manipulates the city region"; "the city region does not give the province the credit it deserves"; "the province cannot accept us as a city region", "their arrogance and ego make it impossible to work together..."*.

Mistrust and the rivalry between the city region and the province damaged the strategic capacity of the RCA. Respondents from the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, from the municipalities and even from the private sector claimed that the differences between the city region and the province eroded attempts to lobby central government. Furthermore, the gaps with the province weakened the realization of many projects. The competitive relations between the province and the city region appeared to challenge the internal relations within members of the city region itself. Respondents from different municipalities disclosed that they felt trapped between two potential promoters of their local interests. Use of one appeared to exclude the use of the other. At the same time, municipalities found it risky to concentrate all their collaborative efforts into one regional authority. The relative wealth of the province brought some of the municipalities to bypass the city region's council and to look for financial support directly from the province. A civil servant from one of the municipalities revealed: *"as a single municipality you always need to take the rivalry between city region and the province into consideration. You pay extra attention to what you say and to whom you talk. That is not useful for good cooperation. This attitude undermines your thinking capacity. It damages the cooperation"* (Official from a larger municipality).

Respondents from the city region acknowledged the seductive influence of the province and its resources for individual municipalities operating within the RCA. Many of them showed understanding for the municipalities who wanted to promote their own local ambitions (even when it might sometimes weaken regional coherency). A top official of the city region referred to the tendency of municipalities to work both

within the city regions and with the province: *“It is not something the city region is happy about but it seems to be inevitable. There is no way to convince the municipalities not to apply to the province for support in their projects.”*

To conclude, it appears that in the city region the influence of external actors like the central government and the province on regional strategic capacity was evident. While the power of the central government had a stimulating role towards the RCA, the power of the province appeared competitive – and therefore detrimental to the regional collaboration.

### **4.3.2 Internal power in a duo-centric region**

Concentration of distributive power within the RCA can enhance regional strategic capacity according to the fourth hypothesis outlined in the first chapter. The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen is an official inter-municipal organization that holds its own legal competences and budget for the realization of regional projects. The official status of the city region grants it unique resources it can employ to promote regional policies.

#### *1. The power of the city region administration*

The city region council is the only body that has official legal competences to act in the name of the municipalities and portray comprehensive spatial economic strategies for the area. The RCA controls its own budget for realizing potential projects in the region. This budget (ca. €75 million annually) grants the city region a unique distributive resource in relation to the municipalities in whose name it operates. However, the formal institutions and the resources granted to the RCA by its budget have had a positive influence on the cooperation within the region, as respondents contended (see 4.2.4). The financial and juridical resources appeared to enhance the interaction with external parties (increased reception) as well as increase the collective capacity to consolidate spatial strategies and bring them to realization.

Respondents from central government and the private sector said they found it efficient to work with a single regional body representing all 20 municipalities. The existence of the city region as a representative of the collaborating municipalities encouraged external parties to get involved and interact with regional matters. External parties from both the public and the private sector preferred dealing with a unified regional body that radiated unified voice. Had this not been the case, they might have had lost interest in engaging with regional issues or had been forced to consult with every municipality individually. The official status and the formalized process of decision-making by majority vote as in the city region had a positive influence on the capacity to make decisions and select strategic policy choices. The board of governors had the legal authority to produce regional plans that had to be approved by the regional council. A simple majority within the council was sufficient to approve a plan. There was no official need to satisfy or earn the support of all members of the city region.



The result of this process was a series of policy documents in the fields of spatial development, transport and economy that found their way to the realization phase.

## *II. A tale of two cities*

The city region supplied the municipalities with a collaborative platform they did not have before. Prior to the introduction of the city region, the collaborative tradition of the municipalities was limited. The two larger cities experienced a traditional competitive position that did not disappear entirely with the initiation of the city region and the regional council. Frictions and rivalry between the Arnhem and Nijmegen continued to find their expressions in different ways within the region.

The two municipalities did not adopt a cooperative attitude towards each other under the administrative umbrella of the RCA. They did not lobby for each other's projects and they conducted almost no bilateral agreements concerning coordination of their spatial expansion towards each other. Nijmegen, for instance, did not support any campaign to attract additional investments for upgrading the central station of Arnhem – the only station in the region connected to the high speed train network. Nor did Nijmegen support the lobbying campaign led by Arnhem to upgrade the existing rail tracks between Arnhem and Schiphol. Such an upgrade would have enabled high speed trains to zoom from Germany via Arnhem towards the west of the Netherlands.

The competition for the national historical museum is another example of the limited cooperative attitude between the two cities. A central government initiative to open a national museum brought different cities to compete for hosting it. Cities from different regions applied for candidacy, including Arnhem *and* Nijmegen. The two cities competed as aggressively with each other as they did with the other candidate cities from outside the region. No effort was made to collaborate in order to increase the likelihood of either one getting the prestigious project. More evidence for the limited cooperative atmosphere between the two cities appeared during efforts to promote joint transport projects by the city region. These joint initiatives got often a reluctant response from both Arnhem and Nijmegen. The city councils of both cities did not embrace the rapid public transport project lobbied for by the city region (De Gelderlander 2008b). The two cities were also quite passive when it came to realizing a new regional park (Lingezegen) initiated by the RCA and the municipalities. Both Nijmegen and Arnhem decided not to contribute (financially) to this regional park between the rivers which lies on the border of their jurisdictions (De Gelderlander 2008c, 2008d). Other joint plans like the coordination of the regional retail supply in Nijmegen, Arnhem and the area along the A325 did not yield an agreement as the relevant municipalities continued their autonomous development and independent uncoordinated allocation of retailing enterprises.

The reluctant position of the cities to actually embrace joined projects initiated by the city region was revealed by the fact the cities did not completely adopt or integrate the regional declared strategy to develop the area between the rivers in their local agendas. Ironic, then, that the official competences granted to the city region thus were

predicated on the active cooperation of two larger cities which showed hardly any desire to cooperate with each other. One of the respondents summarized the relations in the region by the words: *“The power lies within the two larger cities and this is totally in conflict with the principles of the city region. Aldermen of the larger cities can determine the regional agenda if they want. The only problem is that the two cities do not really feel connected to the city region and do not identify with what it wishes to promote”* (Alderman from a smaller municipality).

Respondents from the city region acknowledged the rivalry between cities in the region but they saw in that rivalry justification of the RCA’s potential mediation function. At the same time, however, when the two larger cities did agree on an issue which was against the official preference of the rest of the city region, the RCA found it almost impossible to promote its policies. Thus, the interdependency between the city region and the larger cities was evident. These complex relational patterns were expressed by one of the civil servants of the municipalities: *“Both Arnhem and Nijmegen are very important in the region; the other 18 municipalities cooperate with the line determined by the larger cities. These two cities lie with their back towards each other. They collaborate only when they feel they need to stop the rest of the city region from promoting development they do not support, or when they feel they need to put the city region’s chairman in his place”* (Civil servant from the city region).

### *III. Emerging administrative autonomy*

The chairman of the city region’s board of governors was an appointed governor who held the portfolio of regional administration, finance and the external relations of the city region. Contrary to the other four members of the regional board of governors, the chairman did not serve at the same time as an alderman by a local municipality. That put the chairman in the unique position as his entire activity was dedicated solely to the regional council to which he reported. As the other regional governors were simultaneously active as aldermen in one of the participating regional municipalities, they were in a constant state of double accountability (to the regional and to their own local councils). The unique position of the chairman granted him a certain neutrality and limited direct dependency on local politics. Such neutrality appeared to be an important issue in a split, duo-centric region. To a certain extent, the independence of the chairman was the result of the rivalry between Arnhem and Nijmegen. One respondent contended that *“Arnhem and Nijmegen could live with any chairman, as long as he does not come from the other competing city”*.

The independence of the chairman combined with what all respondents described as his personal *‘unique charisma and leading capacities’* made him very influential within the city region. Combined with the relatively passive attitude of the municipal representatives, the dominance of the chairman became even more potent. Some of the respondents saw in his dominance and independence one of the reasons for a growing gap between the city region and the municipalities it was supposed to serve. Others respondents, especially from the province and the municipalities, saw in an

independent chairman a threat to the quality of the cooperation. They asserted that as an independent governor, the chairman put all his attention and focus on the city region, but at the same time he ignored, or at least was unaware of, the local politics that shaped the municipalities' position towards the regional initiatives. In turn, that led to a practice in which the chairman and the civil apparatus of the city region promoted regional issues in a tempo perceived as too quick for the municipalities to catch up with. It was too quick for them to be able to shape their own position concerning regional initiatives and actively contribute to them. The city region as a coordinating body with its independent chairman, its own administrative apparatus and its own budget was perceived by some respondents as disconnected from the municipalities, and therefore not really representative.

Some of the critics, especially from the municipalities, claimed that the growing gap between municipalities and the RCA was the fault of the municipalities which did not harness the administration of the city region. One respondent warned: *“The city region must not get too institutionalized and become autonomous organization that takes over the lead of the region instead of the cities. There is a threat that it is becoming the case here. The dominance of the city region pushes municipalities to become passive, just waiting to see how the city region fails to realize its own policies...”*.

Respondents of the city region's administration were familiar with the criticism over their tendency to initiate and lead processes by themselves. The growing criticism led, according to them, to a gradual change in the way they interacted with the municipalities while leading collective processes. According to them, a gradual change was taking place by the (city) regional leadership in which a cautious attitude, patience and humbleness towards the municipalities were preferred. This shift resembled the acknowledgement of the regional leadership that their leading position was fundamentally granted by the participating municipalities rather than from their official competences.

#### **4.3.3 Collective power – the reflexive impact of cooperative network**

The Arnhem-Nijmegen case reveals how the collective power of the network increased strategic capacity. It appeared to stimulate stakeholders to get involved in the regional strategic effort, tackle new challenges and raise commitment to regional agreements. This increased levels of reception, consolidation and realization.

Various respondents from external stakeholders (especially central government and the private sector) expressed their admiration to the RCA and the quality of its strategic output. For example, representatives of the Ministry of Spatial Planning and respondents from the private sector emphasized the fruitful cooperation they experienced while consulting and collaborating with governors and practitioners of the city region. At the same time, governors and practitioners of the RCA expressed a sense of pride and enthusiasm about their collaborations. They appeared to radiate enthusiasm when engaging with other potential external partners. Some respondents revealed that the enthusiasm of representatives of the city region was occasionally used

as tactic to attract external actors to engage and invest in the region: *“The city region made sure it had a good image in the eyes of the central government. It was important that the central government would consider the city region as a good partner for collaboration. That they would think their in the ministry, ‘hey, things are being done there!’. We present ourselves as a region that is eager to exploit its qualities. We present ourselves as a good partner for cooperation”* (Civil servant from a larger municipality).

The positive image of the RCA stoked forces that helped it expand both in terms of stakeholders involved as policy fields it collaborates on. Hoping to enjoy the benefits of the collaboration, two neighboring municipalities (Druten and West Maas en Waal) started joining procedures in the summer of 2008 in order to officially join the RCA (De Gelderlander 2008a). This was an expression of the tendency of an RCA to attract more stakeholders once it is seen as successful. The sense of success and fruitful collaboration appeared to enhance the capacity of the RCA to combine policy fields and promote collaboration in other policy issues. Respondents involved in the composition of the economic agenda revealed that the good experience accumulated during the composition of the regional mobility plan encouraged the RCA to continue to similarly tackle other policy fields. The enthusiasm enhanced the cooperative atmosphere: *“When the project of the regional economic agenda just started, I could not imagine that so many parties from outside the city region, would so quickly want to get involved in the preparations. It spread like an oil spill. Municipalities, private companies and educational centers actively searched for connections to the regional economic agenda”* (Respondent from the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen).

The positive impact of perceived success on regional decision-making capacity was apparent during regional consultation concerning agreements on selected projects the region would promote. RCA respondents contended that as long as municipalities felt that their annual contribution to the city region was ‘earned back’ in the form of projects, they appeared to be content; therefore, little differences between the municipalities occurred regarding regional investments. As the yearly contribution of the municipalities to the city region was less than 5% of its annual budget, it was an easy task to keep most municipalities content and ‘cover their costs’: *“Generally speaking, there are no conflicts between municipalities as long as everybody gets something out the collaboration. As long as the municipalities financially gain more than they pay, there are no complaints. However, if they get less, then they threaten to step out of the collaboration. At the end, it is extremely important for the participants to gain enough benefits from the cooperation”* (Civil servant of the city region).

The appreciation of the RCA increased the sense of responsibility towards the cooperation itself. Respondents pointed out that shared responsibility for the collaborative network was one of the mechanisms that kept parties aligned with regional agreements and prevented a destructive domino effect. There was a strong belief among the different municipalities that it was better to remain *within* the collaboration than completely remain out of it. Even at times when municipalities were disappointed by the city region, none of them contemplated leaving the RCA. The

connecting force of the collaboration itself and the collective power it produced appeared to hold the collaborating parties together and avoid the dismantling of the collaboration: *“Of course there are moments in which municipalities ask themselves what they gain from participating in the city region. But they do not step out because there is always the potential to gain something. You are condemned to continue working with each other. You may compare it to a ‘marriage of convenience’. There is an acknowledgement of a win-win potential within the marriage but ‘love’ has got nothing to do with it. The beneficial potentials make parties stick to each other and sustain the collaboration. Only by continuously producing a unified voice do you get attention from the central government”* (Civil servant of a larger municipality).

## **4.4 CONCLUSIONS**

The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen represents a case of a compulsory RCA that strove to improve competitiveness of a duo-centric region. Strategic output and the interviews conducted shed light on the relation between the compulsory character of the RCA and its strategic capacity. The role of power for promoting collective action, as revealed in the case, was crucial.

### **4.4.1 Non-voluntary RCA with substantial strategic capacity**

The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen revealed high strategic capacity. It demonstrated capacity to involve various groups of stakeholders in different interrelated policy fields and compose sound spatial economic strategies for the region. The RCA also showed high selectivity regarding strategic choices and projects that necessitated the collaboration of external partners for execution. That was evident especially in infrastructure projects, and when defining economic clusters. Nevertheless, strategic capacity appeared to be weaker in internal matters, like the coordination of the rapid public transport system, the development of Lingezege Park and the coordination of regional retail development. The realization of almost 25,000 houses by the 20 municipalities was one of the few projects in which the municipalities themselves pushed the regional ambitions towards realization.

Confirming the first hypothesis laid out in the second chapter, the mandatory character of the city region aided its relatively high strategic capacity. Indeed, many respondents supported the legislative obligation to collaborate strategically. The legal status of the RCA provided a formal administrative structure for continuous and institutionalized cooperation. The legal status alone, however, was clearly not enough for the development of regional awareness and a genuine collective attitude among the collaborating municipalities. Besides, in the legal status and budgetary capacity of the RCA, municipalities saw an instrument to promote their own narrow local ambitions. The compulsion to cooperate was not enough to ensure appreciation and acknowledgement from municipalities of each other’s distinctive qualities.

Due to the legal status of the city region, it tended to act as an independent organ, setting its own policy agenda. Accordingly, participating municipalities developed a sense of alienation towards the city region. Whilst the legislative dimension of the city region clearly had a positive impact on the collaboration, the extent was limited. Although it offered a framework for collaboration, there was no panacea for internal differentiations and the lack of regional cohesion among participants. The case gives little support for the alleged trade-off between wide inclusion of stakeholders in the strategic forming and the regional capacity to select and implement policies. Even though it was sometimes perceived that wide stakeholder involvement demanded more coordination between diverse interests, parties in the Arnhem-Nijmegen RCA could still collaborate and achieve substantial strategic capacity.

#### **4.4.2 The constructive impact of power on regional strategic capacity**

The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen confirms the productive impact power can have on stimulating regional collaboration. The case reveals the crucial role powerful external actors such a central government may have on the strategic capacity of a RCA. The central government was crucial for the initiation of the RCA and stimulating the involvements of other actors. The central government stimulated the city region to achieve selectivity and increased coherency between the projects he submitted for co-financing. The central government officially approved and financed many of the projects submitted by the city region and by that it directly contributed to their realization.

However, the case also illustrates how external distributive power can disturb cooperation and how hostile use of resources can frustrate regional collaboration. The inconsistent position of the central government with regard to the official status of the city region, and the continuous debate concerning its future was experienced by the regional stakeholders as highly disruptive to the creation of a collaborative atmosphere. The destructive impact of antagonistic external power was even more evident with regard to the Gelderland province. By contrast with the ministries, the province did little to enhance or stimulate cooperation with the city region. Instead, it presented itself as a potential alternative to the RCA, or a potential bilateral partner for different municipalities. That has led to cautious and erratic tactics among the collaborating municipalities. They were tempted to look to the province for support for their local ambitions whenever they could not obtain support within the city region. The RCA perceived this interaction as threatening.

The case of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen confirms the constructive impact of the internal concentration of distributive power on the strategic capacity of the RCA. The formal competences of the city region and the availability of its own budget allowed it to initiate strategies for the region in transport, economic development and spatial planning. Concentrating legal power in the shape of an official authority masked the existing power relations between the municipalities. The existence of an official authority responsible for the promotion of inter-municipal collaboration turned up to

bridge the rivalry between the two larger cities of the region. However, the legislative power of the city region appeared to have a less constructive impact on strategic capacity. Since there was a lack of cooperative tradition between the cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen, the RCA's two big guns, the emergence of the city region served as a new power source with legal and financial competences, leading to a suspicious attitude towards the city region and its initiatives. The RCA found it difficult to harness municipalities' support for different internal collective projects. To a certain extent, the administration of the city region grew to become an external power in relation to the collaborating municipalities, competing to their commitment against the province. The internal power concentration within the official institution of the city region can be seen as constructive. However, the juridical and financial resources of the city region were heavily conditioned by its ability to attract and involve the collaborating parties in order to bring projects to realization.

The case of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen also confirms the constructive role of collective power structured within the collaborative network. Appreciation of the city region and its achievements attracted external parties from the private and the public sectors to join in its regional initiatives. It even led to the official application of neighboring municipalities to join the RCA. The reflexive effect of the collective power resulting from the collaboration encouraged the RCA to collaborate in more policy fields and to tackle new challenges. Even though not all regional initiatives came to a successful realization, and even though occasional internal differences occurred, the general sense of purpose that came out of the collaboration kept the municipalities together and contributed to their continuous effort to produce meaningful collective strategies.