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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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## THE POWER TO COLLABORATE – COMPARISON AND CONCLUSIONS

The three Regional Collaborative Associations (RCAs) showed different strategic capacities during their attempts to enhance competitiveness through coordination of their spatial and economic developments. Surprisingly, the research did not find any direct relation between the character of the collaboration (compulsory or voluntary) and the strategic capacity achieved. Contrary to the first hypothesis postulating that voluntary associations are *not* likely to produce meaningful collaboration (Norris 2001a, Visser 2004, Hulst 2005), the findings show they actually can. One voluntary RCA, the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, successfully integrated the strategic components to such a level that in some aspects it even surpassed the strategic capacity of the compulsory RCA of Arnhem-Nijmegen. The case of BrabantStad, however, demonstrated that achieving high strategic capacity by voluntary RCAs is often situation-dependent. The differences witnessed between the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and BrabantStad show that strategic capacity was dependent on auspicious institutional features that existed in Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and were absent in BrabantStad. Alternatively, the differences could be explained by institutional hurdles that existed in BrabantStad and were absent in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The comparison also refuted the suggestion that a large number of stakeholders prevent an RCA from making clear choices and producing a coherent set of interrelated projects that correspond with general shared strategy. The three cases did not provide empirical data that could support such a postulation. Actually, the three cases suggested the contrary. The RCA with most members (Amsterdam Metropolitan Area) demonstrated the highest strategic capacity while the RCA with the least members (BrabantStad) achieved the lowest.

The comparison between the three RCAs revealed that neither the level of official internal hierarchy nor the scope and intensity of stakeholders' involvement appeared to determine the quality of the collaboration and its strategic capacity. In accordance with the postulated hypotheses regarding a constructive impact of power on regional collaborations, the results demonstrated that power and authority can be considered indispensable for collective action and regional strategic capacity both in voluntary as in compulsory collaboration. Power and authority appeared crucial to stimulate the achievement of high strategic capacity in all cases. The different types of power, the manner power was generated and used by actors proved central to the collaborative dynamics within the region. Particularly the interrelation between the external, the internal and the collective power eventually determined the strategic capacity of the investigated RCAs.

## 6.1 THE OBSERVED STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF THREE RCAs

The comparison of the strategic capacity is based on theories of the three separated components of strategic planning in competing regions:

- ‘Reception’ – the capacity to incorporate relevant stakeholders, their insights and resources;
- ‘Consolidation’ – the capacity to consolidate well defined strategic decisions from the pool of thoughts, ideas, desires and alternatives, and produce coherent integrated strategies;
- ‘Realization’ – the capacity to maintain strategic durability and stakeholders’ commitment when bringing strategies towards implementation.

### 6.1.1 Reception capacity

Table 6.1 specifies the capacity of the three RCAs to involve stakeholders in the strategic formation process of the regions.

Table 6.1: Reception Capacity of three RCAs

RECEPTION ASPECT	BRABANTSTAD	CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN	AMSTERDAM METROP. AREA
RCA MEMBERS	1 province 5 municipalities	20 municipalities	2 provinces 36 municipalities
ENDURING PARTICIPATION	- Ministries	- Ministries - Private sector’s representatives	- Ministries - Private sector’s representatives
INCIDENTAL PARTICIPATION	- Local municipalities, - Neighboring municipalities - Private companies - NGOs	- Neighboring municipalities - Private companies - NGOs	- Neighboring municipalities - Private companies - NGOs
MULTIPLICITY OF POLICY FIELDS	- Strategic projects - Transport - Culture	- Housing - Spatial Planning - Transport - Economy	- Housing - Spatial planning - Transport - Economy
<b>RECEPTION CAPACITY</b>	<b>Limited:</b> Exclusive, Multilevel governments	<b>Moderate:</b> Inclusive, Single level governments	<b>High:</b> Inclusive, Multilevel governments

All three RCAs are governmentally led and have a strong tendency to include local governments and regularly engage ministries during consultations regarding future developments and regional investments. All RCAs were initiated and are being facilitated by governments. The participating governmental bodies, however, are limited to those located within the territorial footprint formed by the municipalities composing the investigated RCAs. External governmental bodies like EU agencies or regional and local governments from neighboring regions are hardly involved at all in the observed collective practice and the RCAs appeared to pay only limited attention to the positions and the opportunities external governments could offer. Although both BrabantStad and the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen operate an office in Brussels for lobbying and promotion of the RCAs' interests within the different European programs, traces of those potential programs within the RCAs themselves remain limited. Worse, even within their national borders, all three RCAs showed limited collaboration with neighboring municipalities who don't take permanent part in the regional associations. Failing to conduct enduring engagements with European programs and neighboring regions (within and outside the national borders) left potential resources unexploited.

The RCAs differed from each other in the scope and intensity in which the provinces were involved in the regional strategic formation process. In BrabantStad and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, the provinces were fully engaged. The province functioned as a leader in BrabantStad and was markedly involved in Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. In City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen, however, the province did not take part in the collaborative practice and was not involved in the regional strategic forming process. The three RCAs demonstrated varying degrees through which municipalities within the region were engaged in the strategic collaborative process. BrabantStad appeared less inclusive compared with the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. BrabantStad excluded smaller municipalities within the region which requested to join the RCA. In this way, the opportunity to expand the base of knowledge and create regional support for the strategic output remained partial. The City Region Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area on the other hand translated their collective impact into an expansion of their scope of local engagements. Especially in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, the growing appreciation for the RCA stimulated gradual and sustained growth in the number of members active in the collaboration. The inclusive and non-statutory features of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area allowed additional interested municipalities to join the RCA easily and without any juridical or statutory procedures.

The dominant inter-governmental character of the three RCAs accentuates the relative incapacity of the RCA to engage non-governmental stakeholders in the collaborative process. The declared ambitions of the central government to intensify public-private collaboration in the regions and involve societal groups in regional strategic forming processes did not receive solid form in the collaborative practice yet. In all RCAs, (though in different degrees) the private sector lagged clearly behind the involvement of the stakeholders from the public sector. Here as well, BrabantStad appeared less capable to engage with non-governmental actors as it remained incidental and sporadic. The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and Amsterdam Metropolitan Area conducted

enduring relations with representatives of the private sector (Employers organizations and handle chambers) in developing economic strategies but appeared incapable to contract companies to the spatial strategies and the regional investments in housing and infrastructure. All in all, and despite the nuances between the three cases, it appears that all investigated RCAs demonstrated rather introverted collaborative practice which, besides the tight relation with the ministries, did not manage to substantially expand the scale of cooperation beyond the circle of intra-regional stakeholders and the inter-governmental domain.

### 6.1.2 Consolidation capacity

The second component of regional strategic capacity refers to the collective ability of RCAs to form content-based strategies, set priorities for collective effort (in lobbying and for internal coordinative processes) and increase coherency between them (through increased integration). Table 6.2 specifies the consolidation capacity of the three investigated RCAs.

Table 6.2: Consolidation capacity of thee RCAs

CONSOLID. ASPECT	BRABANTSTAD	CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN	AMSTERDAM METROPOLITAN AREA
STRATEGY FORMATION	<b>X</b> No content-based strategy	√ Content-based strategy	√ Content-based strategy
LOBBY	√ Intensive unified lobby	√ Intensive unified lobby	√ Intensive unified lobby
INTERNAL COORDINATIVE PROCESSES	<b>X</b> No spatial shared projects/policies	√ Housing distribution Economic program Mobility plans Detail market	√ Housing Economic program Mobility plans Office market
INTEGRATED POLICIES/ INTERNAL COHERENCY BETWEEN PROJECTS	<b>X</b> Limited interrelation and coherency	√ Highly interrelated and coherent	√ High interrelated and coherent
<b>CONSOLID. CAPACITY</b>	<b>Limited:</b> Sporadic lobby	<b>High:</b> Shared strategic framing Coherent lobby Coherent distribution	<b>High:</b> Shared strategic framing Coherent lobby Coherent distribution

BrabantStad demonstrated lower consolidation capacity compared to Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. BrabantStad produced neither long-term content-based spatial economic strategy nor clear conceptual guidelines which could be used to increase coherency and prioritization between potential projects. Generic content-based strategy was composed and clearly defined by both the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. Nevertheless, with or without a content-based strategy all RCAs usually managed to radiate regional unity and conduct coherent shared lobbying for specific projects whose realization was dependent on an external actor (usually a ministry). All RCAs demonstrated a high capacity to lobby efficiently for desired projects. The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area could base their regional lobby on the co-produced strategy. BrabantStad, however, had to search for alternatives as it had no regional strategy. Through the introduction of consequent lobby arrangements in which the RCA lobby for each other's projects by turn, BrabantStad proved capable to promote its members projects even without a strategy.

In internal matters regarding regional distributive projects such as housing, offices, and other developments, the three RCAs showed differentiated capacities as well.

BrabantStad had no internal coordinating activities (other than lobbying) and did not practice joint problem-solving. Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, on the other hand, produced internal collective agreements regarding the construction of sufficient houses in their regions, promotion of economic activity and coordination of open space policies in the regions. The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen was the only RCA which defined regional economic clusters and used those as a base for collaborative practice with regional corporate representatives and research centers. Amsterdam Metropolitan Area was the only RCA which coordinated future housing distribution and regional supply of office spaces between regional municipalities.<sup>7</sup>

The strategic output of BrabantStad produced sporadic projects which were poorly interrelated and reflected a limited cohesion between policy fields. Even though the projects produced by BrabantStad did not frustrate each other, they hardly had any synergetic relation with each other, either. Any synergetic effect yielded by the different projects was incidental or accidental, but definitely not planned. Since BrabantStad did not produce general regional policies, the coordination between different policy fields could not have been deliberately integrated. Better practice was observed in the Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. Both managed to combine different policy fields according to their selected spatial economic strategies. The spatial economic profiles of the different municipalities, the regional spread of jobs, the allocation of future housing and the given mobility conditions – all those fed the regional strategic formation process and produced decisions that followed coherent lines and integrated related policies.

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<sup>7</sup> The city region Arnhem-Nijmegen defined general regional targets for future housing as well though without internal agreements over distribution as described in chapter 4.

### 6.1.3 Realization capacity

The three cases shared some similar features regarding the way the regional consolidated output was brought towards realization (see table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Realization capacity of the three RCAs

REALIZATION ASPECT	BRABANTSTAD	CITY REGION ARNHEM – NIJMEGEN	AMSTERDAM METROPOLITAN AREA
COLLECTIVE LOBBY EFFORT	Most projects honored by ministries	Most projects honored by ministries	Most projects honored by ministries
INTERNAL COORDINATIVE PROCESSES	Did not exist	Limited progress	Limited progress
<b>REALIZATION CAPACITY</b>	<b>Limited:</b> ministerial contribution	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In all RCAs the collective efforts to lobby were effective as the relevant ministries adopted regional positions regarding strategic frames and choices. Ministries included regional projects within their investment programs and reserved budgets for their execution. Surprisingly, BrabantStad demonstrated lobbying capacities which did not fall short of the other RCAs. The lack of content-based strategy did not seem to frustrate BrabantStad's collective lobbying efforts for desired central governmental investments.

Yet, collective projects due to be realized by the RCA members themselves appeared to have some delays regarding the official confirmation of local stakeholders in the envisioned regional output in all cases. In BrabantStad, shared projects were limited to cultural events and regional marketing. And for the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area and the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, collective distributive attempts (in regional housing, office/industrial zones and open spaces) appeared to be more difficult to sustain and to bring to realization compared to the lobby-oriented projects. For its part, in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, collaborating municipalities occasionally withdrew from regional agreements or regional attempts to promote internal coordination in development. The RCA was not able to introduce the agreed-upon differentiation in the regional supply of large retail services. Municipalities also chose not to participate in the financing of the regional Lingezege Park. A better result was achieved in the construction of housing. In this regional project, however, the central government itself had served as initiator and subsidizer. In the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, the low tempo and barriers preventing new housing construction awoke concern regarding the feasibility of realizing the regional housing program on time. Similarly, attempts to designate new industrial areas did not lead to any concrete agreement.

Those alarm bells may hint that some of the consolidated output had no wide support among those stakeholders upon which the realization of regional strategies or projects was dependent. In the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, for example, the objection of municipalities around the IJ-Meer to Almere's expansion westwards was not thoroughly addressed during the regional strategic consultations. Then, during the realization phase, these same objections caused alarming obstacles to Almere's expansion. Difficulties in promoting shared projects in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen did not gain the hoped-for results when the concrete plans (coordinated retail markets) and investments (Lingezegeen park) were supposed to be delivered. Here as well a gap appears to have emerged between declared collective ambitions and the actual commitment of stakeholders.

## **6.2 POWER AND REGIONAL STRATEGIC CAPACITY**

Every case independently illustrates the constructive impact power had on the quality of the collective action and the capacity of collaborating parties to conduct fruitful cooperation. The comparison showed how the interrelations and the composition of external, internal and collective power shaped the dynamics within the RCAs and influenced their strategic capacity. The cases analyzed in the research confirmed the conjecture that both distributive power as well as structured power embedded within the collective itself would promote strong regional collective action. Particular composition of power which provided harmonious combination of its disclosures could convincingly explain successful collaborative practice. At the same time, dissonant combinations of forces led to paralyzing effects, stalemates and sub-optimal performances of the RCAs. However, the source of power, whether external, internal or collective, was not the only aspect that determined the RCAs' strategic capacity.

A great deal of this capacity was also determined by the form in which power was exercised to influence subordinated actors. Direct use of resources, subtle exclusion and authoritative influence were the different forms by which the powerful in the three RCAs managed to wield control over the others. Table 6.4 combines the sources (external, internal and collective), the forms (resources, process and meaning) and the level of coherency in which they interacted together with the demonstrated strategic capacity of the three investigated RCAs. As the table reveals, concentrated and explicit expressions of external, internal and collective powers correspond with higher strategic capacity of the RCAs. Focal distributive power within external or eternal actors and shared collective power promoted collective strategic capacity of the RCAs.



Table 6.4: Power typology and strategic capacity of three RCAs (dominant dimension of power boldly emphasized)

		BRABANTSTAD	CITY REGION ARNHEM-NIJMEGEN	AMSTERDAM METROP. AREA
EXTERNAL DISTRIBUTIVE POWER		<b>Incoherent power of resources</b> Conflicting external actors	<b>Dispersed power of resources</b> Uncoordinated external actors	<b>Coherent power of resources</b> Coordinated external actors
INTERNAL DISTRIBUTIVE POWER		Dispersed power of resources  <b>Power of process</b>	<b>Concentrated power of resources</b>  Power of process	Dispersed power of resources  Power of process  <b>Power of Meaning</b>
STRUCTURED COLLECTIVE POWER		<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
STRATEGIC CAPACITY	RECEP.	Limited	Moderate	High
	CONSOLID.	Limited	High	High
	REALIZ.	Limited	Moderate	Moderate

### 6.2.1 The constructive impact of external distributive power

The three RCAs were initiated as a reaction to a central government action. Perceived central government bias towards other regions brought the five cities and the province of Brabant to initiate BrabantStad. Central governmental legislation formed the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen. And the task given by the central government of building a sufficient number of houses in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area brought that region to initiate the first regional conference of the North Wing. The financial resources of the ministries and their legislative power over lower governments triggered the regional collaboration in the investigated cases. However, this external initiating force

did not evolve from explicit dictation by the external powerful actor. In all cases, the central government did not impose content-based development even though it had the potential to do just that. Instead, the resources of the central government triggered the regional partners to organize themselves in a collaborative way. The constructive influence of the resources held by the ministries appeared even more crucial during the collaborative practice itself. The legislative and financial resources of the ministries granted them the power to challenge the RCAs and stimulate certain outcomes by defining conditions under which ministerial support to the regions was granted. The potential support the ministries could offer was not conditioned by the content. Instead, this support was dependent on the quality of the regional strategic output and the RCAs' capacity to radiate wide regional support to a selected number of projects. The ministries of Transport, Spatial Planning and Economic Affairs occasionally conditioned their support with qualitative features regarding the three defined components of competitive strategic planning. Those included the regional capacity to engage non-governmental stakeholders in regional projects (increased 'reception'), capacity to prevail and pronounce selected number of strategic projects and point out coherent interrelation between them (increased 'consolidation') and capacity to reserve regional budgets to participate in the realization of the regional strategy (increased 'realization').

Lukes' first dimension of power – the power of resources – was used by the ministries in the three cases not necessarily as repressive power that wished to impose a certain outcome, but rather as an enabling power that could be available for regional use if the regional partners fulfilled the conditions set by the ministries that possessed the resources. Potentially, such an attitude could lead to conflicting interaction between ministries and regions, as Lukes warns, but when presented as an opportunity rather than as a threat, as was observed in the cases, the resources of the external actor did not necessarily lead to a clash. The external resources even proved to be constructive for the collaboration. Still, not all RCAs reacted the same way and with the same level of strategic capacity to the resources the ministries held. The reason why the three RCAs produced varied levels of strategic capacity is partly explained by the fact the ministries themselves did not always live up to the standards they expected from the regions. For example, in BrabantStad, the ministries used their resources incoherently in relation to each other. One ministry used its distributive resources in a way that conflicted with another ministry, according to regional perceptions. The result was paralysis. The RCA faced contradictory external forces advocating different sets of output. Here, the constructive potential of external resources resulted in a stalemate, as no content-based strategy or collective strategic choices were actually produced by the region. What is surprising is that the central government allowed this to happen. In contrast with the declared criteria for central governmental investments in the regions, the central government honored many of the projects submitted by BrabantStad. There seemed to be in practice only limited association between central governmental subsidies for regional projects and the provision of coherent integrated strategies by the region. The incoherent positions of the ministries, together with the limited correspondence between demonstrated regional strategic capacity and the central policies of the central government in honoring regional projects explained the gap

between BrabantStad's limited capacity to draw collective coherent strategies and its high capacity to lobby efficiently and attract central governmental investments for its members.

When the ministries presented a more coherent position towards the RCAs, as in the case of city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and even more in Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, the regional coordinated reaction to the enabling external forces produced higher strategic capacity. The Arnhem-Nijmegen city region experienced external contradictory signals from stakeholders of different governmental tiers. The province, in this case, did not use its resources in harmony with the resources available by the ministries and the city region's administration. This deviation proved unconstructive to the regional collaborative practice, hampered strategic capacity and led to negative consequences for the RCA's ability to produce bold and coherent strategic output. In the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, where the juridical and financial resources of the external actors (ministries) were brought under one national program represented by an appointed coordinating ministry, the enabling impact of the central governmental resources was most obvious. The unified and coherent position of the ministries provided the regional parties a unique opportunity to enjoy their resources at the same time and for the same integrated spatial economic strategy. The condition, however, that the region would produce coherent and convincing strategies that would help to guide central governmental investments provided a strong external incentive to increase strategic capacity of the regional collaboration. Collaborating members of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area did not let this opportunity evaporate and they coordinated their collaboration in tight relations to the inter-ministerial program for the region.

The three cases illustrated the constructive effect the power of resources concentrated by external actors can have on RCAs' strategic capacity. When clear and coherent, the resources of the ministries, provinces or any other external actor brought the regional members to produce similar regional strategies and pronounce clear preferences. Nevertheless, the power of resources held by external actors occasionally revealed deconstructive affect on the regional strategic capacity as well. When external resources were dispersed and jumbled, the regional stakeholders were trapped between contradicting forces that neutralized each other and lost their constructive effect on the regional strategic capacity. The dominant role of the central government as an external power to trigger regional collaboration was not matched by any other actor that could potentially simulate similar collaborative practice in the regions. Neither regional programs of the European Union nor initiatives or pressures coming from the corporate world stimulated the regional collaboration in the investigated RCAs the way the central government did. The central government was the single trigger and the dominant actor to which the RCAs pointed their collective effort in the hope for acknowledgment and adoption of their regional positions. The dependency of the regions on the central government is therefore striking as the ministries declared decentralization and regional scale of governance as official lead in national policies (chapter 1). Substantial gaps appear to exist between declared ambitions of the central government regarding regional empowerment and the actual regional output which is

still very much responsive to central governmental policies and predominantly characterized by lobby oriented strategic output aiming at the different ministries.

### **6.2.2 The constructive impact of internal distributive power**

The three RCAs are characterized by different legislative frameworks and different types of working atmospheres that influence the relations between the collaborating actors and have accentuated different forms of power to the fore. Traces of Lukes' three-dimensional typology of power were observable in almost all the RCAs. Nevertheless, every RCA could be generally characterized by a distinctive type of power which came most explicitly to the fore. Power concentration in one or few of the collaborating actors appeared constructive for achieving high strategic capacity in the RCA. The spatial differences between the three RCAs revealed different spreads of power among actors and different forms (dimension) of power exercised by the powerful. The three cases finely illustrate how central cities become centers of control and command towards peripheries and hinterlands (Friedmann 1986, Lefèvere 1998, Taylor 2004 p.88). The differences between the polycentric, duo-centric and monocentric regions accentuated how different forms of power emerge and affect regional strategic capacity.

In BrabantStad, both the 'power of resources' and the 'power of process' were present during the regional strategic forming process. North-Brabant Province enjoyed legislative and financial resources that granted it a level of power towards the municipalities, despite the fact that its statutory competences were not operational in all of them (Eindhoven and Helmond were part of the city region Eindhoven). Indeed, the concentration of resources by the province proved constructive as it initiated and facilitated the RCA's collaboration. However, the provincial attempts to increase strategic capacity by composing a long-term strategy to increase regional cohesion alienated the municipal members of BrabantStad. The cities were reluctant to let other partners influence their own local development. The 'power of resources' the province possessed appeared inadequate to persuade the stakeholders to compose shared spatial economic strategies. The polycentric character of BrabantStad, together with the exclusion of cities from the hinterland, eradicated potential power concentrations linked to place centrality from developing within the RCA. The participating cities did not acknowledge each other's relative advantages to a level that allowed them to officially pronounce and promote functional complementarity.

In order to promote their shared interest after all, the five cities (with the support of the province) thoroughly used Lukes' second dimension of power ('power of process'). The exclusion of all other municipalities from participation in the RCA allowed the five municipal members to demonstrate tolerance toward each other's often competing ambitions as they all shared the same lobby mechanism to promote their own local projects. Using the 'power of process' to reinforce the exclusion of rural or small industrial municipalities allowed the BrabantStad collaborating members to focus on their own urban projects, generating regional frustration in some of the excluded

parties. Nevertheless, the dispersed power of resources among BrabantStad's cities, together with the abundance use of 'power of process' did not appear constructive for the promotion of high strategic capacity in the region as the case revealed. Implicit expression of the effect of the 'power of process' was also observed in the case of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen. There, the small and dynamic administration of the city region led a strategic formation processes with external parties (regional, private sector and ministries) in a manner that was occasionally conceived as hard to trace and to control by the municipalities participating in the RCA. As in BrabantStad, the use of 'preemptive power' (Stone 1988) that avoided the emergence of issues and interests other than those of the decision makers served the powerful actors that gained control on the regional agenda. But the use of preemptive power created frustrations among parties who failed to promote their own objectives. Those frustrations were not always discharged in the form of immediate conflict, but just like in the other cases, they accumulated and eventually hampered development once active contribution of the excluded parties was needed in the realization phases.

The relative success of the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen in consolidating coherent strategic output is referred not only to the 'power of process' conducted by the administration of the city region but also by the resources it possessed (Lukes' first dimension of power). The juridical and financial resources of Arnhem-Nijmegen allowed it to grow over the rivalry between the two larger cities in the duo-centric region. The competitive relations between Arnhem and Nijmegen prevented them from developing their own genuine collaborative approach that would allow them profit from each others strengths. The city region administration, with its official competences granted from the legislator, managed to grow over the duo-centric patterns and the rivalry of the two cities.

Contrary to the province in BrabantStad and the regional council in the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen, the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area had no actor which held legislative resources that allowed it to guide spatial economic development in the regional area. Here, too, preemptive power was exercised by a powerful coalition. Occasionally, when the larger municipalities were backed by the provinces, they could feign a united regional position towards the central government on certain issues. They managed to achieve that occasionally by distancing the smaller RCA members from the concrete decision-making moments. By intentional obfuscation in the formulation of decisions regarding disputable issues, weaker opposing parties were embraced by the dominant regional parties in a way that their objections were bypassed or driven away. Similar to the other cases, the use of preemptive power as a form of 'power of process' appeared unconstructive when the cooperation of the objecting parties was needed for the realization of the unpopular development. Crude exclusion of parties from the RCA, raising the level of abstraction during general consultations while reaching concrete agreements in narrower circles, and the use of quick initiatives in a high working tempo hard for other parties to follow, were all expression to the use of the 'power of process'.

In all cases, some parties were omitted from the circle of decision makers or lacked real possibility to influence the RCA's strategic output. Parties that sensed such exclusion however, tended to be less cooperative when their actual cooperation was required for the smooth implementations of the regional agreements as the three cases demonstrated. Hence, the power of actors to exclude certain parties and certain issues from the regional collaboration may seem constructive for the selection and definition of courses of action but may lead to drawbacks during realization of regional projects.

Much more effective for the promotion of high strategic capacity in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area was the use of the 'power of meaning' (Lukes' third dimension of power) in different regional issues. This dimension of power in which a certain actor exercises authoritative domination had a pervasive role in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. Although power might not be something a city can possess or hold for it self, the right mix of people and resources can give some cities an advantage over others (Allen 1999). The cooptive power of Amsterdam municipality attracted and connected the other municipalities in the region to a shared position which reflected the individual position of Amsterdam. The centrality of Amsterdam in the monocentric region appeared to grant it the cooptive power which enabled it to smoothly influence others' perceptions and preferences. Amsterdam could align regional stakeholders to its preferences since it was able to convince them that no alternative appeared to exist, or because it was seen natural or beneficial to the other regional stakeholders. From its powerful position, Amsterdam managed to transfer a sense of urgency over certain issues and promote its own preferences. The acknowledgement of Amsterdam's centrality and the wish of less dominant members to be associated with Amsterdam and benefit from its human and political resources granted Amsterdam the 'soft power' (Nye 1990b) it wielded so successfully. With its cooptive power, Amsterdam could link the other regional members of the RCA to a collective strategy. City region Arnhem-Nijmegen, with its juridical resources, could not. Therefore, the power of meaning as exercised by Amsterdam granted it greater authority compared to the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and assisted the Dutch capital in connecting with its RCA partners. The 'power of meaning' Amsterdam occasionally exercised did not only emerge from its unequivocal position in the region. In addition to the centrality of Amsterdam was the shift in its image and the way this image was perceived by the other collaborating municipalities. The capital's cooptive power appeared to be conditioned by the desertion of the paternalistic attitude and arrogant image previously associated with Amsterdam. The 'power of meaning' could be exercised when Amsterdam adopted a collaborative and inclusive attitude towards its regional partners. The cooptive power was therefore to a certain extent granted to Amsterdam by the surrounding peripheral municipalities. This power was dependent on the continuous conviction of the RCA members that Amsterdam carried relative advantages and its contribution for the collaborating group was indispensable. As Arendt wrote: "*Power is never the property of an individual, it belongs to a group and remains in existence only as long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to him being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name*" (Arendt 1970 p.44).

Just like the different contributions the ministries took towards the three RCAs, the provinces had different inputs as well. The province in BrabantStad was the initiator of the RCA and the partner that coordinated and facilitated the collaboration. In the city region of Arnhem-Nijmegen the province had no enduring part in the RCA and was even perceived as being hostile to the RCA. And in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area the province took on a facilitative role in the RCA together with the municipality of Amsterdam. The different roles the provinces fulfilled suggest that the provinces, as the only elected government in the RCA with a vision that extends across municipal borders, still struggle to find and define their place within the regional collaborative efforts. The fact the provinces enjoy legislative legitimacy to steer regional strategies creates a delicate relationship with suspicious municipalities and central ministries that seem to prevent it from fulfilling a substantial and dominant role in the regional collaborative practice. In none of the cases did the province appear to function as an indispensable mediator between the central government and the municipalities or among the municipalities themselves. Despite their unique positions, none of the provinces managed to channel their resources or cooptive power so as to manage internal conflicts between municipalities, bind them to a shared regional vision or fundamentally increase strategic capacity.

### **6.2.3 The constructive impact of structured collective power**

Collaboration carries internal energizing potential that may bind actors together and reinforce their collective action (Arendt 1958, 1970; Parsons 1963). Collaborative relations that are practiced and reproduced systematically shape the structured power which iteratively stimulates actors to associate with the emergent collaborative patterns (Giddens 1981; Mann 1986). The collective power of the RCAs appeared to have a stimulating effect both on the collective capacity to internalize knowledge and the capacity to consolidate collective strategic output. When present, the mobilizing energy of the collective increased the strategic component as it attracted external stakeholders to join the perceived successful and effective RCA. Growing success and proven ability to shape the external environment increased interdependencies between the collaborating parties within the RCAs. The growing interdependencies in turn, increased adherence to the collective efforts and to the collaborative association. Traces of the constructive impact of collective success and the collective power emerging from it were observable in all three RCAs, though not to the same degree (table 6.4). BrabantStad produced less potent collective power compared to the Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The five cities of BrabantStad did experience a level of success that could have allowed them to grow over their initial reluctance and cautious attitude towards each other. However, the collaborative practice did not deliver a sufficient sense of success and achievement to convince and encourage the municipalities to trade some of their immediate local interests for the sake of long-term collective goals. There were not enough examples (from the external and internal parties) to indicate collective success and experience collective attainments in a manner that would stoke enthusiasm. The result was an

intangible sense of interdependence between the collaborating cities which at the same time did not lead to a strong binding of the collaborating cities to the RCA.

Several reasons may explain the relative weaker binding the municipalities experienced with BrabantStad and the limited perception of collective success. BrabantStad did not select a number of major projects to be promoted collectively. Instead it chose to promote an abundance of smaller local projects, weakening the explicitness of the collaborative advantage. The abundance of smaller projects gave all parties a sense that they gained benefits but there was no convincing feeling that the promoted local projects wouldn't have been realized anyhow without BrabantStad's collective effort. The fact the ministries did not challenge BrabantStad and did not condition central governmental investments with the formation of regional strategy and the selection of a limited number of strategic projects reinforced that point. The municipalities did not sense that they gained something from the collaboration that they wouldn't have gained without it because of the abundance of unrelated local projects and the weak stimulus of the central government to produce coherent and integrated regional strategy by BrabantStad. Lack of challenge by the external actors (central government) appeared to obscure collective accomplishments of the regional collaborating parties. To the limited sense of interdependency within BrabantStad contributed the fact that some members collaborated simultaneously within parallel RCAs that were occasionally perceived as competing with BrabantStad (especially the collaboration of Eindhoven and Helmond with the collaborative network of Brainport). The availability of parallel collaborative forums over comparable issues reduced the dependency of the actors on a single RCA and as a result, the interdependence between the regional actors.

In Arnhem-Nijmegen, and to broader extent in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, the sense of collective success and its contribution to increased interdependence appeared to be stronger. Here, the appreciation to the collaboration and a sense of collective success contributed to all three dimensions of strategic capacity. The energizing effect of all RCAs attracted the attention of external actors (higher governments, neighboring governments, private sector). Sensing the mobilizing effect of the RCAs, external actors were motivated to either join as a member (municipalities) or to communicate with it more intensely (corporate representatives and NGOs). Positive collaborative experience also brought the city region Arnhem-Nijmegen and the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area to try and reproduce the collaborative practice in other related policy fields. The expansion of the collaboration in other policy fields increased both the regional collective knowledge base (reception) and the coherency between projects and the likelihood of synergetic connectivity between different policy fields (consolidation). The collective power in both RCAs enabled stakeholders to produce strategies, prioritize between options and promote actors' commitments to carry out collective decisions. The collective power bound frustrated parties to the collaborative practice even when they experienced disappointments. On those occasions, collective power prevented disappointed actors from deserting the RCA. The interdependency between the actors and their perception that the continuous participation served their local interests on the long run helped the whole collaborative association to overcome occasional disputes. The emergent collective power that came out of the collaboration



and the appreciation participants had to their collective achievements (and more important, what might still be achieved) increased the strategic capacity of the RCAs.

## **6.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The challenge of promoting competitive collective action (detecting synergetic potentials and exploiting them to increase regional competitiveness) requires exigent capacities. It requires the ability to mobilize regional stakeholders in a concerted way and to produce well-coordinated actions from which regional competitiveness and attractiveness for investments will be increased. The ongoing debate regarding the kind of governance practices that produce high strategic capacity has yielded different attempts to create the right institutional settings. Some of these were top-down, geared with governmental reforms or other facilitating legislation. Others adopted collaborative practice within given institutional setting. Those collaborating experiences were often bottom-up and had a loose and unofficial character.

### **6.3.1 High strategic capacity and the governance dilemma**

The first sub-research question referred to the ability of bottom-up voluntary RCAs to achieve high strategic capacity. Doubting voices coming from previous experiences in the Netherlands, other parts of Western Europe and North America raised the postulation that a voluntary regional collaboration would not be able to integrate the ability to attract a large number of stakeholders and at the same time, produce clear and coherent spatial economic strategies and projects. The analysis of the three cases in the Netherlands, however, did not reveal any direct relation between the voluntary or compulsory character of the RCA and the strategic capacity demonstrated by the collaborating practices. Whilst the case of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area showed that with a voluntary framework high strategic capacity *can* be achieved, BrabantStad illustrated that this high capacity cannot be achieved under all circumstances. Doubts concerning the ability of voluntary collaboration to produce high strategic capacity (Norris 2001a 2001b Hulst 2005) are therefore only partly verified in the cases. The experience of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area shows that, at least under certain conditions, the strategic capacity of voluntary RCAs may prove high. The consistency of voluntary regional collaboration as observed in BrabantStad and Amsterdam Metropolitan Area were not temporarily phenomena as voluntary RCAs often are (Visser 2004). On the contrary, the voluntary Amsterdam Metropolitan Area tended not only to sustain collaboration but even to intensify it. Contrary to the experiences in North America with voluntary regional collaborations (Miller 2000), Amsterdam Metropolitan Area proved capable of tackling controversial regional issues and present pragmatic solutions despite its voluntary character.

The comparison revealed that achieving high strategic capacity is not necessarily conditioned or promoted by limiting the number, the scope or the intensity by which stakeholders are involved in the collaborative practice. There was no evidence for the

postulated negative relation between the size of the RCA and the level of its inclusiveness and the strategic value of its collective output. On the contrary, higher consolidation capacity was observed by the more inclusive RCAs that systematically involved the highest number of collaborating members. Applying principles of communicative processes and collaborative approach (Healey 1997) at the regional practice of strategic planning appeared to have positive results for the whole strategic capacity of the regional cooperating parties. RCAs that conducted wider dialogues with municipalities while tackling different regional issues managed to accumulate critical mass and create wider support to the collective regional output. The involvement and communication with regional stakeholders appeared to be an indispensable condition for the creation and the maintenance of central actors' dominance within the collective. The authoritative power ('power of meaning' in Lukes' terms) concentrated by central actors was granted to them by members of the RCA. The involvement of wide range of newcomers gave the dominant actors the legitimacy and the ability to transform their own interests to become the interests of the region as a whole.

The overall analysis suggests that the conditions for fruitful regional collaboration and high strategic capacity are not dependent on specific administrative structures or certain hierarchical organizational forms. Supportive conditions lie neither in the organizational features of the RCAs nor by regulative procedures. They lie within the nature of the interactions between the relevant stakeholders in the region. Those interactions reflect the distribution of power among actors and the creation of a communal power base. When the regional interactions reflect a balanced composition of enabling powers which come together in concert, the collaborating parties are likely to yield high strategic capacity. The favorable composition of power reflects the potentials and the impact of power as a mobilizing and empowering force (power to) rather than a hierarchical instrument for command and control (power over).

### **6.3.2 Power at the service of competitive collective action**

The comparison between the three RCAs and the search for a mechanism to explain the observed differences in the level of regional strategic capacity support the postulation that power and authority conduct the prevailing influence on collective action. Under certain conditions, both stimulated the quality of regional collaboration and raised its strategic capacity. The findings support the views which emphasize the positive, enabling effects power can bring to communities and individuals. Power which enables the achievement of collective goals, mobilizes collective resources and improves regional competitiveness, is fed by the interrelations between internal and external actors and intrinsic group's dynamics. Power differences therefore should not be necessarily considered 'negative' or destructive to societal interaction in general, and in strategic planning in particular. If well harnessed, and coherently used, power appears to function as faithful servant for the collective interests and the regional shared goals. The comparison revealed that distributive power that comes across in a coherent manner triggers and stimulates regional collaboration and collective strategic forming. Other sources of enabling power include the existence of concentrated

distributive power within the collaboration. Eventually, the level of strategic capacity is influenced by the collective power emerging from the collaboration itself.

### *I. External power (EP)*

External actors that hold resources the collaborating actors lack can trigger and stimulate regional collective action. By linking potential rewards with certain collective achievements, the external actor can incentivize collaborative behavior within a group. When the external actor distributes its resources to the regions according to criteria of competitive strategic planning, the regional partners are stimulated to achieve the required level of strategic capacity set by the external powerful actor. The coherency of the signals radiated by the external powerful actors is crucial. Incoherent acts of external actors towards the collaborating regional parties or the availability of potential rewards for different or contradictive collective output appear to reduce the strategic capacity of the collaborating members in the region.

The different ministries of the central government in the Netherlands as the most dominant external actors must therefore conduct stable and constant regional policies and avoid impulsive zigzags in their expressed standpoints regarding regional issues. The same coherent principle is repeatable in the relations between the ministries themselves. In order to stimulate the regions to produce coherent and integrated strategic output the ministries must ensure they are well coordinated and that they radiate integrated signals to the region. Contradictory forces acting upon the region from the outside carry paralyzing effects on the RCA. External power that incites coherent collective action with high strategic capacity is not characterized by a rigid hierarchical approach. Effective external power stimulates a (desired) collective reaction in the region rather than imposes docility upon regional subordinates.

### *II. Internal power (IP)*

Comparable relations between power concentration and the level of strategic capacity were observed within the RCA itself as well. A powerful actor *within* the collaboration could use its resources to reward other actors (or preclude potential reward from them) for certain behaviors or actions conducted by them. Power could also avoid potential conflicts and radiate (seemingly) collective unity by preventing some of the issues to receive collective attention during the collaboration ('power of process'). The most effective use of internal power, however, proved to be the 'power of meaning'. Central actors with regional radiation appear capable to use their persuasion capacity effectively in stimulating certain behavior among stakeholders. Cooptive power held by an outstanding actor within the RCA may cause other members to relate to its position, to share its ideas and definitions of problems and engage with its eventual success or failure. The 'power of meaning', as Lukes predicts (1974 p.21), gains better collaborative results and leads to higher strategic capacity compared to the use of resources (reward and oppression) and prevention (exclusion of certain stakeholders or preventing certain issues from reaching the regional agenda).

Contrary to the external powerful actor which could effectively trigger high strategic capacity in an RCA by using resources (concrete rewards), the powerful actor within the collaboration is required to gain its power and authority by engaging the other actors to its image, norms, and ideas. The cooptive power entails circumspective behavior of the central actor in the collaborating collective. In order to execute its power effectively and increase collective strategic capacity it must gain the trust, respect and aspiration of the subordinated RCA members and avoid arrogance and dictating posture. An actor with cooptive power was detected only in the monocentric Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, where a central local government (Amsterdam) carried most significant role in the regional economy and politics. The existence of a single central city with outstanding radiation was coupled with collective acknowledgement and appreciation to its leading position. In the duo-centric and the polycentric regions no city enjoyed any comparable position that allowed it to lead.

### *III. Collective power (CP)*

The collective power structured within the collaboration maintained symbiotic relations with collective strategic capacity. Emerging collective power resulting from initial collective success increases all three components of strategic capacity, which iteratively, increase again the collective power of the collaborating parties. The emerging collective power attracts new stakeholders and new initiatives, enables the exploitation of synergetic potentials, binds the collaborating stakeholders to agreements and influences the strategic behavior of external actors. The collective power increases the knowledge base of the collaboration, its impact on the competitive environment in which it operates and the adherence of the individual collaborating actors. Pronounced success and the perception of the collaboration as fruitful and beneficial are therefore crucial for producing and maintaining collective power in the RCA. In order to benefit from the collective power the collaboration is required to translate the collective efforts to tangible positive results which would encourage intensification of the collaborative practice. This success is often expressed by the collective capacity to mold the competitive environment in which the region operates and by the ability to influence powerful external actors (like the national ministries) to act in accordance with the regional preferences.

The collective power of the collaborative network and the external distributive power concentrated by external actors are therefore fiercely interrelated: the external powerful actor ignites coordinated collective reaction from which collective power emerges. When the external actor reacts in accordance with the deliberated collective action, the collective power increases further. The emergence of collective power is therefore dependent on its capacity to influence the external actor, engage it to the regional collective goals and use its resources in accordance with the collective desires. The behavior of the external powerful actor is eventually the canvas upon which the collective action becomes observable.

### **6.3.3 The emerging pattern for enhanced strategic capacity of competing regions**

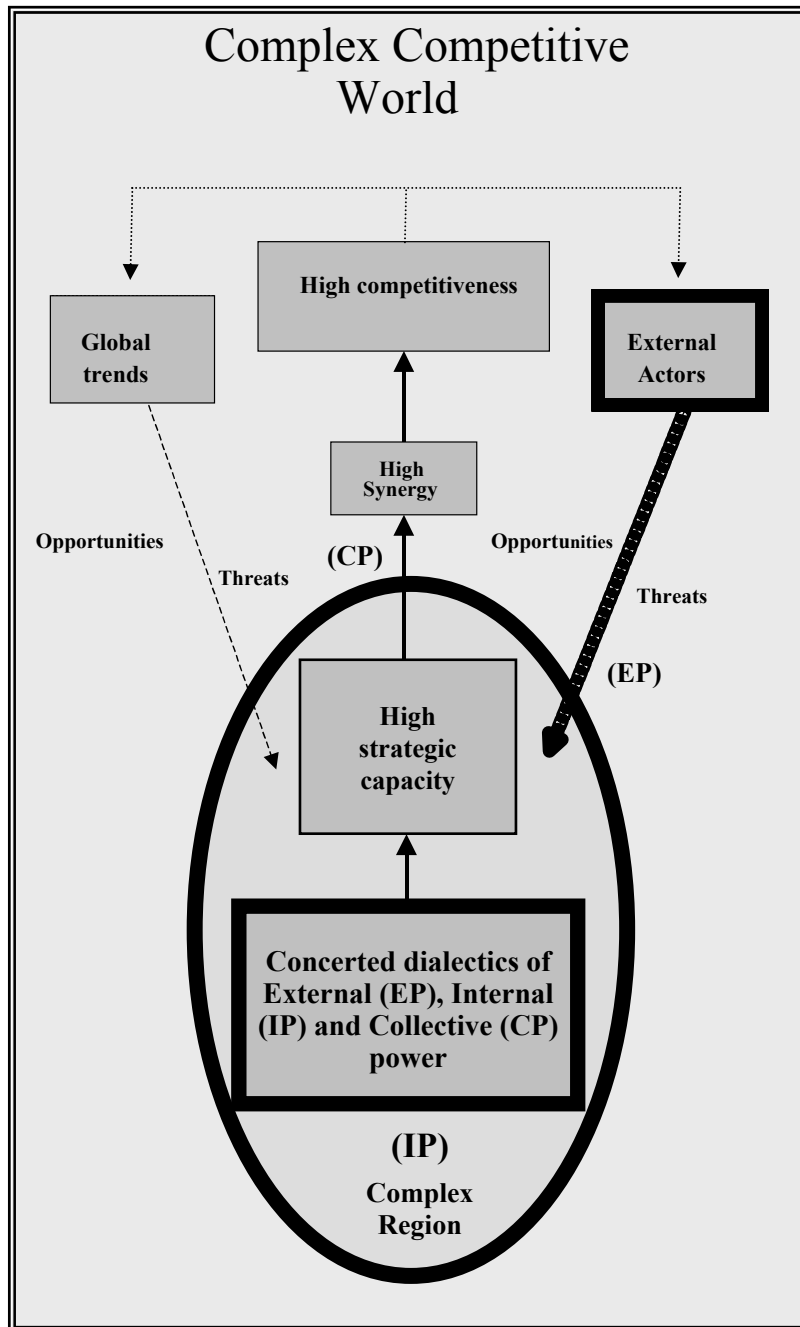
The research aim was to gain insight on the institutional conditions that enhance strategic capacity of competing regions and enable them to engage a wide circle of stakeholders, produce coherent spatial economic strategies and bring these towards realization. The research results imply that high strategic capacity of regional collaborative associations will be achieved when coherent external distributive power (EP) triggers and stimulates RCA members to collaborate by either opportunity or a threat it might radiate towards them. As a reaction to the external incentive, internal distributive power (IP) may suffice enough capacity to engage collaborating members to address the external incentives with a collective reaction. By successful reaction, collective power (CP) of the group will emerge and increase members' adherence and continuity of the collaboration. When significant, the collective action would bring to changes in the inter-regional competing arena that in turn, would create new opportunities and threats in an iterative manner (figure 6.1 in the following page).

The growing voices calling to improve regional governance by promoting collaborative practice rather than continuous amendments of a rigid structure based on law or designated territory may find these principles useful. Concentrating the governance debate on collaborative practices does not exclude the great influence of existing hierarchies and structures on power relations. It applies however a growing focus on the way power is generated and the way power is used rather than its (re)distribution. Under these circumstances, the promotion of regional collaboration is not dependent solely on optimal distribution of competences and resources but rather on the way and the manner in which this power may be used to promote desired future development of the regions.

### **6.3.4 Further research regarding regional collaboration and its perspectives**

Although this research reveals how external, internal and collective power stimulates collaboration and increases collective strategic capacity, some of the interrelations between those sources of power remain still enigmatic. Even though the comparison in this research revealed that high strategic capacity was achieved when all three types of power were present, it is not clear whether all sources of power are imperative for achieving high strategic capacity. This calls for further research to try to estimate if all sources of power are necessary for achieving high strategic capacity and if their relative contribution to enhanced strategic capacity of the regions is equal.

Figure 6.1: Institutional conditions for high strategic capacity of competing regions



The dialectics and the interrelations between the sources of power justify further research as well. The strong link between the existence of external power and the emergence of collective power is evident but further investigation of the interrelations with power concentration within the regional collaboration (internal power) is still required. The concentration of power within the collaborative regional network creates the need for further research regarding the relation between central place theory (from the school of thought of Friedmann (1986), Allen (2003) and Taylor (2004)) and collective action.

The findings of this research strongly suggest that monocentric regions with clear functional hierarchies between cities will achieve higher strategic capacity than polycentric regions where cities share the same horizontal networks. This assertion, however, appears to be conditioned by a cautious attitude of the central place towards the periphery when collaboration in policies is being practiced. Still, the question remains how the absence of central city and its regional influence can be compensated in more polycentric regions. Can the absence of central city be compensated by another type of actor or do the polycentric regions simply doomed for suboptimal strategic capacity? In polycentric BrabantStad, the province appeared to be a strong candidate to compensate of the absence of central city that take the lead. The different roles the provinces held within the investigated RCAs suggest that the relations between this regional government and the other regional stakeholders are still volatile. The provinces, as the only elected regional governments, may fulfill the role of the central actor within a collaboration through mediation and persuasion. Further research of the actual and potential roles of provinces in regional collaborative practice is therefore welcome.

The observed difficulties in engaging non-governmental actors to spatial strategic forming processes on regional scale merits further research as well. Surprisingly, in all RCAs, the participation was predominately governmental with limited participation of the private sector. Involvement of private and non governmental actors in the regional strategic process lagged behind the involvement of public actors in all cases. Spatial economic planning on a regional scale appears still to be a public matter despite the declared aims to involve private and non governmental actors in regional strategies. While central, regional and local governments seem to acknowledge the importance of engaging private and societal organizations in regional strategies they did not manage (or did not really try) to engage those parties enduringly in the strategic forming process. Are the declarations regarding the involvement of stakeholders from outside the government no more than governmental lip service or are there real obstacles in engaging private and societal actors in regional strategic forming processes?

The research raises another question regarding the gap between central governmental decentralization policies and the actual practice observed in the regions. The central government still maintains wide competences and abundant financial resources that trigger regional actors to lobby rather than develop their own regional strategies and coordinate their own spatial economic investments. The dominant position of the central government seems to prevent the regional collaboration to act independently

and freely from central governmental bias. The new Act for Spatial Planning introduced in 2008 does not seem to delegate further competencies to the regions. Further research regarding the relations between the central government and its regions is therefore required in order to understand this gap and the forces behind it.

Another kind of gap was observed between the official commitments of collaborating parties and the actual realization of collective strategic output. This research analyzed the collaborative practice of RCAs over less than a decade (since the beginning of 2001). Much of the collective output has not yet been realized. Many projects produced in these years remain on the to-do lists of various planning schemes. In this research, official commitments and reserved budgets have been used as indications for realizing strategic output. But this cannot be considered as ultimate evidence for the complete physical realization of the collective strategic output. Further research is therefore needed to evaluate the capacity of regional collaboration to carry out longer-term strategies and bring agreed-upon projects to their complete physical realization.

The final recommendation for further research concerns the strong reliance of this research on the Dutch national context. Comparative research as this one, conducted between cases of identical national context keeps away the potential explanatory variables related to nationally-oriented institutions, holding the advantage that variables other than different national systems may become apparent, and the relative ease of amending and improving regional collaborative practice within the same national context. However, the validity of the findings and their generalization capacity still deserves international examination. Comparable international research regarding the relation between power and the strategic capacity of competing regions would offer a substantial empirical contribution to the generalization capacity of the findings of this research.



