

Differences and similarities between transportation hubs regarding cross-border cooperation



Analysis of the Oost-West Poort: A cross-border cooperation between transportation hubs from Belgium and the Netherlands

Geography, Planning and Environment (GPE)
Nijmegen School of Management
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Bachelor thesis
Roel Jansen
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Abstract

Context:

Transportation hubs in itself are places where modes of transport connect with each other surrounded by business activity (Fleming & Hayuth, 1994). Cooperation between transportation hubs is aimed at improving the efficiency of logistics and collaboration (ITF, 2015). There is a need for efficiency improvement because the infrastructure itself is not able to deal with the amounts of freight that is transported. Infrastructure is expensive and static. Expectations are that the demand for infrastructure will only grow (ITF, 2015). This results in the situation in which infrastructure is always lagging behind the demand (Vleugel, 2006). ITF (2015) stated that efficiency improvement is an option for this problem.

Border aspect:

The challenge appears to be more complex when also borders are taken into account. Borders should be taken into account because transportation does not stop at borders. It is logical that borders are crossed according to the geographical location of most countries. But the reality is that borders also discourage spatial interaction (Rietveld, 2012). There are multiple reasons for this. These reasons have all in common that cross-border regions are different from each other. This creates a situation in which transportation hubs on both sides of the border are not good adjusted on each other.

Goal of the research:

The goal of this research is to get a better understanding of cross-border collaboration between transport hubs. The main purpose of this study is to find similarities and differences between transport hubs that use cross-border cooperation. By finding these differences and similarities it gets clear what aspects are that influence the cooperation. A result of this is that actors can understand what need to be changed to get a more efficient cooperation, in which transportation hubs create a better fit with each other.

Methods:

This study made use of a single instrumental casestudy to obtain data, namely the Oost-West Poort project. The Oost-West Poort is a collaboration between a transportation hub in Belgium and a transportation hub in the Netherlands. An instrumental casestudy provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. It does not necessary helps to understand a particular situation completely, but it grants useful information (Stake, 1995). In this case it grants information about similarities and differences between transportation hubs in the Oost-West Poort. The goal of this research will be reached with a theory that can expose

similarities and differences. The theory consists out of 4 dimensions that compares both transportation hubs on these aspects. The data that is needed to do this is obtained by desk research and interviews. This study made use of in depth interviews in order to reveal underlying information. The obtained information from interviews and desk research was analyzed with the 4 different dimensions, whereafter the conclusion was made

Actors:

The analysis shows that the cooperation in the Oost-West Poort is based on mutual benefits. This means that there is a lot of interdependency within the collaboration, because of this it is important that all actors pursue the same purposes. All the involved actors should be determined that the cooperation will yield a sufficient amount of success. This proved to be a favorable similarity in the Oost-West Poort. Actors had a shared vision and valued similar aspects of the cooperation, namely financial and environmental aspects. The dimension basically showed that the formation of actors is a very crucial starting point in cross-border cooperation for transportation hubs.

Rules:

Most borders that exist are not physical barriers that are hard to cross, but also these barriers discourage spatial interaction (Rietveld, 2012). These barriers are created through government regulations and imposed on organisations that do not know these rules or can not meet them (Nilsson, Eskilsson & Ek, 2010). These rules prevent actors to act in certain ways. For instance, a rule in the Oost-West Poort prevented usage of large LHV trucks to transport freight. Difference in law between both countries caused this problem. Furthermore, there was less knowledge about the other country in the Oost-West Poort. This caused unwillingness to collaborate.

Resources:

This study makes use of the 4 resources which are distinguished by Veenman, Liefferink & Arts (2009). These are financial resources, knowledge resources, authority resources and technology resources. Resources can be possessed and used by actors to obtain more powerful positions. This study showed that in the Oost-West Poort financial resources and knowledge resources were far more additive and important to possess than authority resources and technology resources.

Discourses:

Cultural differences were present between actors from different countries, but not between actors from the same country. These differences revealed themselves though speech and

behavior. Next to this, also an environmental discourse could be discovered. This was seen as favorable for the Oost-West Poort because this increases the shared vision and keeps the actors on one line. Furthermore, also scientific approaches towards job related tasks were very similar for both transportation hubs.

Conclusion:

Results of this study showed that finding a similar, but complementary branch, and carefully choosing partners is key to have a good starting position. Furthermore, it got clear that there are a lot of differences between both countries and that through intensive meetings these differences become more understandable for actors. This was important for the Oost-West Poort because this project is heavily relying on manpower, which means that good relationships with actors were crucial.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project framework

This chapter will situate this study into its context. Important aspects of this context will be elaborated separately. Based on information gathered from these aspects a knowledge gap will be revealed. After this more information will be provided about how this knowledge gap will be approached in this study.

1.1.1 Road transportation

Infrastructure is very important for road transport, but during the last decades the investments for infrastructure were on average around 1% of the GDP in European countries (Vleugel, 2006). Two reasons can explain why a government would spend such a small part of its budget to new infrastructure. Either a government does not have the budget, or the government has more important priorities than new infrastructure. Infrastructure is very expensive and the demand for funds are usually much larger than the available funds for infrastructure. This shortage of investments funds lead to a search for other funds, either national or international. The result of this is a slowly growing network of infrastructure that is lagging behind the growth of the demand for transport (Vleugel, 2006).

Expectations are that future trade will only increase, therefore it will be even harder to keep infrastructure on a sufficient level. Trade related international freight is projected to grow by a factor of 4.3 by 2050 (ITF, 2015). This factor includes all the different kinds of transport, in which road transport is a small portion. This growth is expected to be driven by changes in the product composition of trade and by changes in the average hauling distance caused by changes in the geographical composition of trade. The road freight share in global trade will increase from 6% to 10% by 2050 (ITF, 2015). When comparing this to the total grow factor of 4.3 this does not seem very much, but it is important to understand that road transport needs to use fixed tracks that cannot easy be moved. Around 85% of the international freight is transported by sea. The sea has no fixed tracks, therefore it is easier to adapt to the increase of freight. Challenges resulting from this huge increase of freight over sea are expected to occur when the freight reaches land. Ports are expected to have a nearly fourfold of volume by 2050. This will lead to implications towards road transport and traffic management (ITF, 2015). The increasing importance and volume where ports need to deal with creates a situation in which the transportation is not even distributed.

Transportation hubs with good connections with ports and other hubs will become more important and this also means a more uneven distribution of freights. Transportation hubs in itself are places where modes of transport connect with each other. In this study these

modes will be solely roads. At these modes local services can connect with national and international services (Fleming & Hayuth, 1994). The increasing pressure on the road leads to more situations in which infrastructure will be insufficient.

1.1.2 Cross-border cooperation and spatial interaction

Challenges will appear to be more complex when also borders are taken into account. The borders should be taken into account because transportation does not stop at borders. It is even logical that borders are crossed according to the geographical location of most countries. Most borders that are created are not physical barriers that are hard to cross, but also these barriers discourage spatial interaction (Rietveld, 2012). There are numerous reasons for this and these reasons will be discussed further in this study. Because the concept of spatial interaction is used a definition will be given to clarify the concept.

According to Haynes and Fotheringham (1984) spatial interaction can be described as:

“A broad term encompassing any movement over space that results from a human process. It includes journey-to-work, migration, information and commodity flows, student enrollments and conference attendance, the utilization of public and private facilities, and even the transmission of knowledge”.

Next to spatial interaction are also borders important in this paragraph and in the following chapters of this study. Spatial interaction between countries is discouraged by borders. A cross-border cooperation is a collaboration of different organisations from different countries with the goal to reach the desired outcome of that specific project, in which both countries or organisations can profit (Perkmann, 2003). The increased complexity of cross-border projects compared to projects within one country is caused by differences between countries. The bottomline of this is that spatial interaction between countries is often on a low level and cross-border projects struggle with this. New and high quality infrastructure that is able to transport the desired people and goods is one way to encourage spatial interaction around the border areas (ITF, 2015). But the complexity of the establishment of new infrastructure leads to a situation where areas cannot or do not want to upgrade the infrastructure.

History teaches that there are cross-border infrastructure projects that were very successful. An example of this are projects in the regions of Kent and Nord-de-Calais with the Channel Tunnel (Vickerman, 1993). Another example is the Copenhagen-Malmö case with the Øresund that connected the two countries (Bygvra & Westlund, 2004; Hansen & Serin, 2007). History also learned that often projects are not realized or take too much time (Vleugel, 2006). This means that it becomes relevant to find new ways to encourage spatial interaction. ITF (2015) states that options include developing alternative modes of transport, improving the efficiency of supply chains and introducing new technologies. Rietveld (2012)

speaks of a discontinuous effect of spatial interaction at the borders. This means that the intensity of interaction with places closer to the border go down and suddenly drop when the border is reached, see *figure 1*. The further a place is positioned from the border, how likely it is to have less interaction with places across the border.

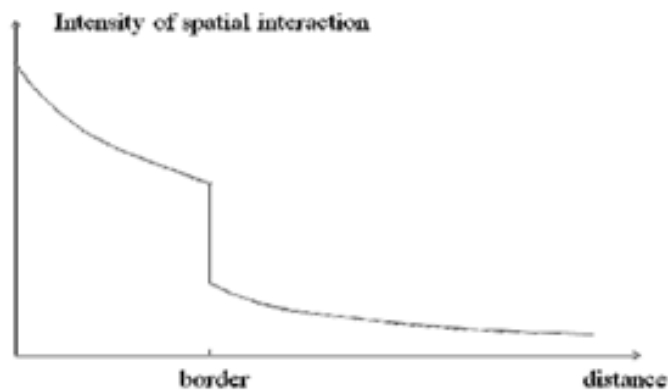


Figure 1
Discontinuous effect of borders on spatial interaction. Reprinted from Rietveld, 2012.

1.1.3 Transport emissions

Transport in general, but particularly road transport delivers many benefits to our society. Road transport allows a fine-grained structure of movement of goods and people. By doing this it supports economic growth and provides employments (European Environment Agency, 2016). However, besides the positive effects road transport has on the economy, it also has a negative side. This side gets currently more and more attention, namely the emissions that are created by the transportation of people and goods. Road transport is a very important source of both air pollutants and greenhouse gasses (European Environment Agency, 2016). Emissions create an interconnection between regions on both side of the border because both regions deal with large amount of emissions. Emissions form a functional aspect for collaboration between transport hubs. Transport hubs can help each other to decrease these emissions, therefore it is a functional aspect for collaboration. In the last decades there were several efficiency and technological improvements achieved in order to decrease the emissions produced by road transport. These achievements have resulted from a combination of measures and policies. Important measures and policies were technological standards for vehicle emissions, fuel quality and the establishment of air quality limits. Despite these improvements in vehicle efficiencies over the past decades, the sector is responsible for almost one fifth of the greenhouse gas emitted in Europe (European Environment Agency, 2016). It is important to achieve efficient cooperation to lower emissions and costs (Friedl & Getzner, 2003).

1.1.4 Knowledge gap

Based on the summed up difficulties that are present in current transport projects, it will be useful to get a better insight in how to create a more efficient cross-border transportation network. Efficiency in this context can be defined as how good actors use the resources that they have when working on a cross-border cooperation that is aimed at strengthening collaboration between transportation hubs. This level of efficiency cannot easily be measured, but it is possible to identify similarities and differences between actors. By getting more knowledge about these similarities and differences it is possible to better understand where an efficiency loss is. With technological improvements emissions of transportation have been decreased. This is something we should definitely continue with, but results about emissions show that these improvements are not enough to achieve the desired goals for the environment.

The difficulties that occur from new infrastructure give a clear view on the fact there is often not enough money and funds available to reach the desired infrastructure, especially in border areas. Without the options to achieve this great transport problems can occur. Instead of trying to achieve these goals with great deals of money it is also possible to achieve more efficient transport hubs due to better adjusted transport areas. There is surprisingly little literature about the improvement of cross-border cooperation between transport areas. Studies about transportation are often focused on the transport in general. Road transportation hubs are a more specific topic and this topic has a shortage of information. The lack of knowledge about similarities and differences between transportation hubs on both sides of the border create a problem. This research will try to clarify the similarities and differences between transportation hubs, so it will be clear which aspects cause difficulties.

1.1.5 Casestudy: Oost West Poort

Recently there has been a cooperation between Dutch and Belgian transportation hubs. The cooperation got the name Oost-West poort and is an Interreg (A) project funded by European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD). It was a cross-border cooperation between the transport hub Venlo (The Netherlands) and the transport hub of West-Flanders (Belgium). The Oost-West Poort project is solely aimed at road transport, this is exactly in which this study is interested. The Oost-West Poort project wanted to extend connections between Venlo and West-Flanders into an economic and sustainable transport area. Both regions form a gateway to important markets. The project is aiming to use these gateways better as a result from increased collaboration. Next to this, another focus point of the Oost-West Poort was to create a more efficient transport network within the border areas. In order to do this the Oost-West Poort attracted actors out of the public sector, the business world and

educational knowledge institutes (oostwestpoort.eu, n.d.). These actors were located in the Netherlands and Belgium and had to cooperate with each other to reach the goals that were set. Because of Interreg funding the project had strict time standards in which it should carry out. This means that the official project was executed between 2011 and 2014 and has already ended. The days of intense collaboration between all the actors are over now, but results are still very noticeable. The actors still profit from the connections that have been made and some have still intense collaboration.

The Oost-West Poort forms a fitting project for this research because Venlo and West-Flanders possess two of the large and active road transportation hubs in West-Europe. The hubs are located in developed and high density regions, which are only expected to grow more. This is similar to how surroundings of future transportation hubs are expected to look like. Most problems will occur in regions like this, therefore it is a fitting project to learn from. Furthermore, the Oost-West Poort is a recent and nearby project. This improves the opportunity to get sufficient information for this study, because traveling time and costs will be less of an issue. Another advantage of this specific project is that actors on both sides of the border speak Dutch. Because of this I am able to communicate and interview actors in their native language. Oost-West Poort was the only project that could provide these advantages and has therefore been chosen to examine as a casestudy.



Figure 2
Oost-West Poort location and most important distribution area. Reprinted from POM West-Flanders (n.d.).

1.2 Relevance

This chapter shows why it is important to execute this specific research. Every research should have a certain relevance to both, society and science. At first the societal relevance of this research will be highlighted. This will be followed with the scientific relevance.

1.2.1 Societal relevance

Regions often cope with high amounts of traffic and congestion. There can be several reasons for this, but it has often to do with the cost of construction of infrastructure, which is appointed in the introductory chapter. There is a lack of money or not the willingness to invest money in the construction of new infrastructure (Vleugel, 2006). Because of this there is a situation in which the efficiency of transportation is on a fairly low level and should be improved. Areas around the border are according to literature subordinated compared to more central placed areas in countries (Rietveld, 2012). For these areas it is interesting to discover ways of collaboration to strengthen the cross-border cooperation with other transport hubs to achieve more collectively. There are multiple organisations and people who would benefit when more knowledge and insight into this subject gets discovered. At first, the transportation companies could save costs and profit more from better cooperation. When a better surrounding is created for these companies it could also attract others and strengthen the hub. This is important because it creates a situation in which the transport hub is able to do more with less costs. Secondly, more efficient cooperation leads to better adjusted road traffic that is meant for the transportation of goods. This has advantages on costs of transport, but also on emissions and the pressure on traffic. These are general advantages and not accounted to specific people or organisations. A decrease in emissions and pressure on traffic are beneficial for the area in general. This will be relevant to other transport hubs as well. It is possible to learn from similarities and differences in the Oost-West Poort and apply the knowledge that is gained in other areas as well.

1.2.2 Scientific relevance

There is not much scientific literature available about intensive collaboration between transport hubs that are divided by a border. This research will make a contribution to the existing literature about cooperation of transportation hubs in general. Literature can be found of multiple transportation hubs that make agreements with each other, but not on two transport hubs with intensive cooperation. Miller & O'Kelly (1994) have done research on connections between transport hubs. That study showed system patterns of connectivity between a lot of transport hubs. It is a useful study, but could not show the similarities and differences which could help explain why certain connections exist. The existing literature is

'zoomed out' and cannot provide in depth information about the transportation hubs. Exactly the in depth information makes the situation and activities around those hubs understandable. By analyzing the Dutch and the Belgium side of the Oost West Poort there is the opportunity to clarify the similarities and differences between them. By choosing for transportation hubs out of different countries the similarities and differences should be extra clear, which enables involved actors to give their thoughts on the effect of the collaboration. When these similarities and differences between the actors are clear it is possible to find out in which way the actors can influence their cooperation. This makes it a very useful addition to the existing literature in which the effects of similarities and differences can also be further elaborated in future studies.

1.3 Research objectives

The goal of this research is to get a better understanding of cooperation between transport hubs that are divided by a border. In this study there is chosen to focus on one particular area to analyze in depth. The area that will be analyzed is the area of the Oost-West Poort. This area has obtained a successful cooperation around Venlo and West-Flanders. The main purpose of this study is to find similarities and differences between transport hubs that use cross-border cooperation. By finding these differences and similarities it gets clear what the aspects are that influence the cooperation. Results of this are that actors can understand what need to be changed in order to get a more efficient cooperation in which hubs create a better fit with each other.

This research will try to reach these results by applying the Policy Arrangement Approach. The Policy Arrangement Approach uses four different dimensions to identify the similarities and differences between transport hubs in the Oost-West Poort. In short the objective of this study can be described as:

The main purpose of this study is to find similarities and differences between transport hubs that use cross-border cooperation by using the Policy Arrangement Approach. By finding these differences and similarities it gets clear which aspects can influence the cooperation in order to make it more efficient.

1.4 Research model

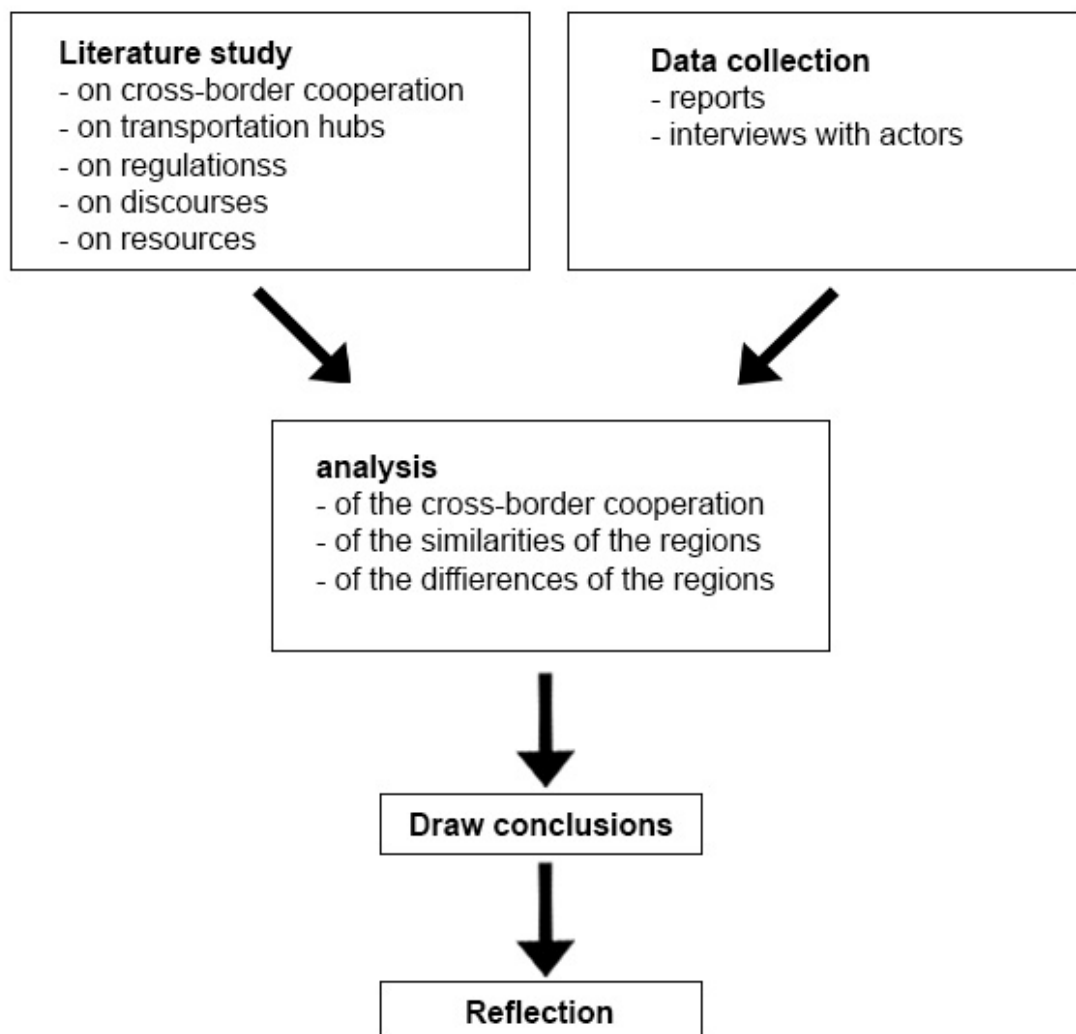


Figure 3
Data collection and analysis (own figure).

This research consists out of 4 major steps that need to be taken in order to be able to reach the research goal. These steps are illustrated in the image above (*Figure 3*). The first step will be the literature study on main topics that are from importance for this research. This general information is needed to create enough background information and different theories to answer the research questions. It is important to do this step first because information gained from the literature study helps to shape the following steps. It shows important concepts and theories to elaborate on at the following steps. Data collection is the second step, this step involves the collection of reports and interviews. This will be a crucial part in obtaining more information about the regulations, discourses and resources used by

the actors involved in the casestudy. Only a part of the desired information can be obtained by literature study. Case specific information will be obtained from reports and interviews. This means that several different methods of data collection are used and this should benefit the triangulation and therefore increases the reliability. Another way to increase triangulation is to use different sources of data collection within a certain method. This means for instance that actors with diverse roles will be interviewed. In the third step the data that is collected from both transportation hubs will be analyzed to identify differences and similarities. The information gathered will be exposed to theories in the analysis part of this research, which will lead to the drawing of conclusions in the fourth step. The next and final step will be the reflection to highlight strong aspects and improvement points of this study, which enables readers to use this study in a well-informed way.

1.5 Research questions

The following questions aim to approach the knowledge gap about the cross-border cooperation of transportation hubs.

Main question:

To what extent do the differences and similarities between transportation hubs located across the border influence cross-border cooperation?

Sub-questions:

- 1. Which actors are involved and how do they contribute to the cross-border cooperation in the Oost-West Poort?*
- 2. To what extent does regulation on different levels (regional, national, international) affect the cooperation in the Oost-West Poort?*
- 3. How are the different resources divided between the actors of the cross-border cooperation in the Oost-West Poort?*
- 4. To what extent do the different discourses affect the cross-border cooperation in the Oost-West Poort?*

2. Theoretic framework

Now it is important to make clear what theories, approaches and concepts will be important in order to answer the research questions. It is crucial to have a good understanding of these definitions because they are the base of this study. In order to answer the sub-questions or even understand them, one must understand the underlying concepts of this study.

This chapter will start with a definition of cross-border cooperation and other main concepts of this study, followed by approaches and theories.

2.1 Cross-border cooperation/alliances

It is important to have a clear understanding of the concept 'cross-border cooperation' and how it can be described. Perkmann (2003) defines cross-border cooperation as:

"A more or less institutionalized collaboration between contiguous sub-national authorities across national borders".

Furthermore, Perkmann (2003) states that the main protagonists of a cross-border cooperation must always be public authorities and should be located in the realm of public agency. Public authorities are able to contact authorities from other countries and take a guiding role in cross-border cooperation. This does not mean that there are no private actors involved in cross-border cooperations. In fact, there are often multiple private actors involved. Cross border cooperation refers to a collaboration of subnational authorities in different countries and rarely involves areas with more than a few million inhabitants (Perkmann, 2003). This means that the areas which are involved in the cross-border cooperations are relatively small. For example, these areas do not include whole countries. Cross-border cooperations are usually the size of provinces or municipalities.

Recently there has been much more international cooperation than before. In the past two decades we have witnessed the acceleration of globalization. Globalization has taken various different forms lately. Beyond the traditional forms, namely foreign direct investment and export, it has become more common for businesses to use cross-border mergers and acquisitions or form cross-border strategic alliances. An advantage of these mergers and acquisitions is the opportunity to extend the businesses influence internationally (OECD, 2001). For this study it is not important to have much knowledge about mergers and acquisitions, but cross-border strategic alliances are important. Strategic alliances have as a feature that they are often competitors in the product markets. Qiu (2001) states that within an alliance firms share their distribution networks, so it is basically a distribution alliance. Furthermore, firms are more likely to establish a cross-border alliance when distribution costs of the products are high (Qiu, 2001). When analyzing the differences between cross-border cooperation and cross-border alliances, it can be seen that both are very similar to each

other. Cross-border cooperation is a 'wide' concept and cross-border alliance is a more narrow one. The main difference that can be spotted is that at cross-border cooperations the sub-national authorities are the main protagonists, but when talking about cross-border alliances the focus is more on firms and their distribution networks.

A reason why more and more of these cooperations are established has to do with globalization. With the accelerating globalization the world gets 'closer' to the people. This means that borders and other countries are closer to the concerns of people. Borders have become a more central concern because a variety of developments. The most notable developments are in the field of flows of goods, information and people, the removal of exchange controls on the cross-border movement of capital, the big increase in foreign direct investment, the cultural globalization in terms of high profile consumer products and communication networks, and lastly the diffusion of neo-liberalism (Anderson, O'Dowd & Wilson, 2003). This is manifested at a general societal level in, for example, environmental concerns and political agitation around immigration control. Issues like this are rather new, but are becoming more pressing and prominent. So, because the people are looking more outside and towards the borders it is something which becomes more important for authorities and organisations to look into.

To get a better understanding of cross-border cooperation it is also important to know more about cross-border regions. The Council of Europe states that cross-border regions are characterized by homogenous features and functional interdependencies. If this was not the case there would be no need for cross-border cooperation (CoE, 1972). These regions are a potential region, inherent in geography, ethnic groups, ecology and economic possibilities, but disrupted by the government's ruling on each side of the border (CoE, 1995). Cross-border cooperation tries to connect these common features due to cooperation. It is very useful to use cross-border cooperation in these cross-border regions, because these regions have a lot of potential, but this is blocked by the border. By organizing cross-border cooperation the goal is to smoothen the collaboration between the regions. The main protagonists are always public authorities and especially these actors can help to overcome the differences that exist as a result of different governments.

Because of the focus on cross-border transportation hubs in this study, it is also important to understand more about Interreg. I think it is important to address this, because Interreg is an organization that makes it financially possible for border regions to collaborate with each other. Interreg helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop a better policy that is focused on interregional cooperation (Interreg Europe, n.d.). There are three different Interreg programs, which are aimed for different kinds of cooperations. The first program is called Interreg A, also known as the cross-border cooperation program. This program is aimed at supporting cooperation between regions of member states which are

directly at the borders or adjacent to them. It aims to tackle common challenges at the border regions and tries to exploit the growth potential in border areas (Interreg Europe, n.d.). The second program is Interreg B, also known as the transnational cooperation program. This program is aiming at regions from several countries which form together bigger areas. It wants to tackle common problems by using a joint approach (Interreg Europe, n.d.). The third Interreg program is Interreg C or interregional cooperation. This program works at pan-European level. Goals are to build networks and develop and exchange transfers of experience by successful regions (Interreg Europe n.d.). In this study the cross-border cooperation program (A) of Interreg is important, also known as Interreg A. This program supports cooperation between regions of different European member states that lie directly or adjacent at the border. The goal is to work together on common challenges around the border area and exploit the unused growth potential (European Commission, n.d.).

2.2 Transportation Hubs

This study focuses on cross-border cooperation of transportation hubs, because of this it will be helpful to elaborate what the concept “transportation hub” stands for regarding to the literature and towards this study. Transportation hubs in itself are places where modes of transport connect with each other. Because of this local services can connect here with national and international services (Fleming & Hayuth, 1994). Miller & O’Kelly (2008) describe transportation hubs as locations in a transportation network that are characterized by high traffic volume and high connectivity to other transport nodes. The modes of transport include different forms of infrastructure, but in this study the modes of transport will only be roads. When also sea routes and air routes are taken into account the feasibility of this study would be questionable, especially in this timeframe. In this study transportation hubs will be more specific specified as a place where cargo is getting exchanged between different road modes. I add this to the description of transportation hubs, because when one is looking for these places where modes of transport connect with each other, it shows that business activity including distribution centers will arise around these areas. These businesses have a very clear connection with road connections, which are appointed in the original description. It would not be wise to think about them separately, because there is cohesion between them.

When speaking about the needed size for transportation hubs, then the concept is rather undefined. In the literature there is not spoken about minimum amount of freight that needs to gets moved, amount of road connections or business activity in order to call a place a transportation hub. During literature research I came to understand that size of the transportation hub in the existing literature is not a crucial aspect in order to determine if the

area can be called a transportation hub. I found it strange that there are no minimum size requirements necessary, because Fleming & Hayuth (1994) and Miller & O'Kelly (2008) speak about nodes, modes and local and national services that need to be present at transportation hubs. It is hard to create certain size requirements for these kind of hubs, because a place can have much modes, but these could be small and less relevant modes. Next to road modes have transportation hubs also business activity around them, such as distribution centers. This already shows the involvement of different actors. Transportation hubs are places which are created by several actors and organisations in which none has solely power because it is constructed and maintained by multiple actors. This makes it a complex place in which cooperation between transportation hubs involves many different actors who are also often dependent on each other. Because of this it seems logical to just say that transportation hubs must have a 'sufficient' amount of business activity around them in order to call them transportation hubs. The reason why I say this is because business activity will always arise at the places where goods are moved and where relevant modes and nodes are located. The word 'sufficient' is used because the amount of businesses are very place determined. For example, the economy and the amount of people in the area must be considered in order to give a statement about the hub.

It is important to know what the important baselines are for transportation hubs. With this information it becomes possible to approach the situation in which a certain transportation hub is in. Fleming & Hayuth (1994) consider centrality and intermediacy as very pertinent for transportation hubs. These terms are used to describe locations between important origins and destinations. Central places contain the generalizable locational attribute of centrality and places that lie on routes contain the generalizable attribute of intermediacy. Transportation hubs have their transport function due to the spatial quality of intermediacy. It could be that transportation hubs are in central position, but they have to be intermediate and lie on routes. If this is not the case there is no use for a transport hub and it would not be used (Fleming & Hayuth, 1994). Parker (1982) states that it can be very useful for transport hubs to have centrality. Parker explains this with the example of St. Petersburg and Moscow. St. Petersburg was the capital of Russia for two centuries, while having the geographic odds against it. But in the end Moscow became the capital of Russia due to its central position. This clarifies that the feature of centrality can be very decisive for the importance of a place.

Now when it is clear what a transportation hub in itself is, there should also go attention to the advantages and disadvantages of transportation hubs. For understanding the concept completely it should be clear what transport hubs can offer and why they exist. The advantages of hubs compared to individual organisations are the economies of scale (Bryan & O'Kelly, 1999). This means that organisations that are located in hubs have advantages

over individual organisations, because they can save costs due to the bundling with other organisations located in the hub. This can be done in different ways. Firstly, transport hubs take advantage through consolidation flows, as well as the handling and sorting of the products (Miller & O'Kelly, 2008). This means that organisations can save costs by jointly taking care of the flows. The connection and interchange of freight flows in hubs make it possible to combine some of these flows which also result in savings of costs (Bryan and O'Kelly, 1999). Secondly, a transport hub allows organisations to reduce network construction costs. It offers indirect connections instead of large numbers of direct connections. It simplifies the network of involved actors (Miller & O'Kelly, 2008). Organisations do not need to intensively maintain the large number of direct connections. More specifically the hub- and spoke configurations at transport hubs make sure that costs are reduced and the process of network construction is simplified. Spokes around the transportation hub create a situation in which the different organisations at the hub are very connected and are able to use each other. Because of these advantages of their location it is a simple way of costs saving for organisations.

2.3. Policy Arrangement Approach

It will be very useful to apply a social theory towards the practical research interest of this study. In this research several approaches can be applied, such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework and the Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA). The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) focuses heavily on 'belief systems' of policy coalitions as the key to explain stability, change, conflict and cooperation (Sabatier, 1999). The Policy Arrangement Approach has a broader selection of key variables to understand policy practices. The four distinguished key variables of the Policy Arrangement Approach are actors, resources, rules and discourses (Arts et al., 2006; Arts & Leroy, 2006). Because of the concept 'discourses' instead of the 'belief systems' of the ACF, a less individualistic and dynamic ontology of policy practices is taken as a starting point (Hayer, 1995). Furthermore, the policy arrangement approach is very fitting to this study because it uses a broader selection of variables and this can be very useful for cross-border cooperation in which actors from very different surroundings are involved.

Wiering & Arts (2006) define a policy arrangement as the way in which a certain policy domain is shaped in terms of organisation and substance. When elaborating the different key variables of the PAA to understand the policy practices, we can divide them in the terms of organisation and substance. The actors, resources and some rules are referring to organisational aspects, while various other rules and discourses are referring to the substantive aspects (Veenman, Liefferink & Arts, 2009). Now it is important to explain these

variables and make sure what they include. The actors include all persons and coalitions who are able to steer the process and have influence on the cooperation. So, the variable 'actor' is there to cover the roles of the ones with influence in the process (Wiering & Arts, 2006). The next dimension, the rules, consists out of legislation, regulations and procedures, relevant to a certain policy domain (Ostrom, 1999). This means that the dimension 'rules' contains formal rules, as well as informal rules. These rules create a sort of playfield for the actors in which they need to act. The third dimension, resources are the possessions and how they are distributed over each other (Giddens, 1984). Resources are assets that the actors can use to exercise power over others. These assets can be money, authority, knowledge or technology (Veenman, Liefferink & Arts, 2009). Usually these resources are not spread equally over the actors. This means that not all actors have the same influence to achieve outcomes. The fourth and last dimension are the discourses. Dryzek (1997) defines discourses as a set of concepts, ideas and narratives that give meaning to a certain phenomenon. Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing and speaking that are accepted as instantiations by particular identities of specific groups (Gee, 2015). The relations between the different dimensions of the PAA are illustrated in *figure 4* below.

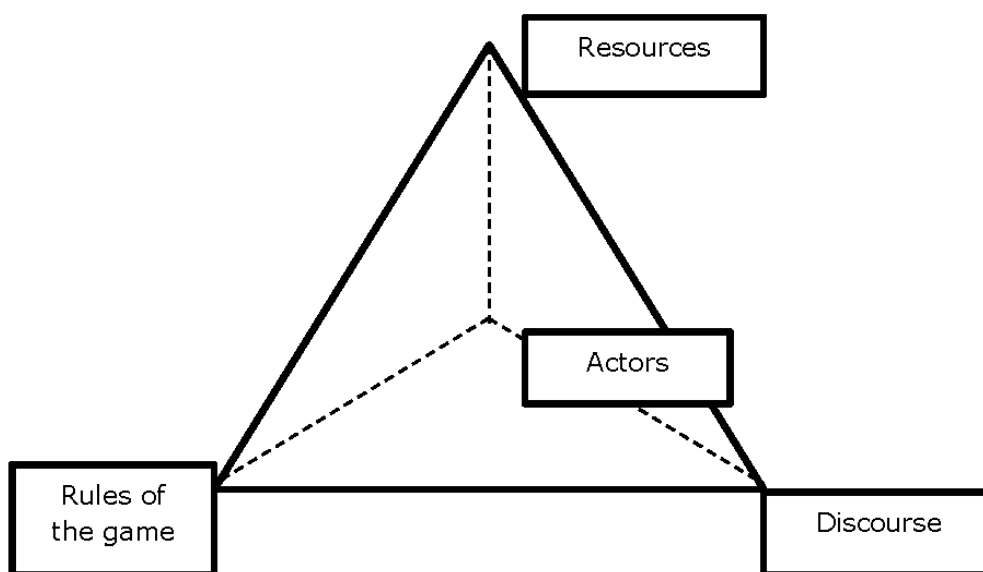


Figure 4

The relations between the four dimensions of the PAA. Reprinted from Intech. (2013).

2.4. Operationalisation

When proceeding this study there must be a clear image of the concepts, how they can be operationalised and eventually be measured. The concept 'policy arrangement' can be described as: "*The temporary stabilisation of the organisation and substance of a policy domain at a specific level of policy making*" (Arts, Van Tatenhove & Leroy, 2000).

The different concepts within the policy arrangement approach in this study will shape the differences and similarities between the actors. This means that it is important to be able to measure these concepts correctly.

Firstly the operationalisation of the actors will be discussed. Actors are all the people, organisations and institutions who are involved in the process of the cooperation between the transportation hubs. A distinction can roughly be made between the actors, namely private actors and public actors. Examples of these are distribution centres and the municipality. The term coalition is used to indicate the interaction between actors. A coalition is a group of actors who have more or less the same policy goals. These common goals form a base for the involvement in the policy process (Van der Zouwen & Van den Top, 2000).

Rules of the game or legislation determine how policies and politics are played and which norms are legitimate. A distinction is often made between formal and informal rules. Formal rules are rules where actors have formally agreed upon, while informal rules reflect the dominant political culture (Van der Zouwen & Van den Top, 2000). The formal rules include legislation made on different governmental levels, namely regional, national and international.

The third dimension, resources, is determined by the dependency relations and the distribution of resources among the actors. The distribution of these resources determine the influence of the actors in the different stages of the policy process. Veenman, Liefferink & Arts (2009) use the following different types of resources: financial resources, knowledge resources, authority resources and technology resources. Financial resources can be measured by the usage of money by different actors. Knowledge will be operationalised with new input of actors on this subject. Authority will be measured based on the influence actors had on aspects outside of the cooperation, such as laws. Finally technology will be measured based on new systems or devices which are of importance for this collaboration.

Discourses can be defined as ideas, concepts and visions through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices' (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). When doing discourse analysis three specific issues should be taken into account. Namely scientific paradigms, means for communicating and cultural differences. Scientific paradigms relate to the background of involved actors in the policy. Usually this background has an important role in the

development of the policy. Policy programmes have often underlying discourses and values that need to be taken into account. In this study scientific paradigms are different incidences and approaches towards communication and the way of working based on background of actors. The means for communication are the images, the metaphors or the analogies that are used in a discourse that can help us understand what is at stake. Means for communication shows what the underlying reasons are for communication (Larrue, Hegger & Trémorin, 2013).

Table 1

Indicators of the Policy Arrangement Approach

Actors	Rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public actors - Private actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional legislations - National legislations - International legislations - Informal rules
Resources	Discourses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial resources - Knowledge resources - Authority resources - Technology resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visions - Concepts - Ideas - Historical values - Scientific paradigms - Means for communicating

2.5. Conceptual model

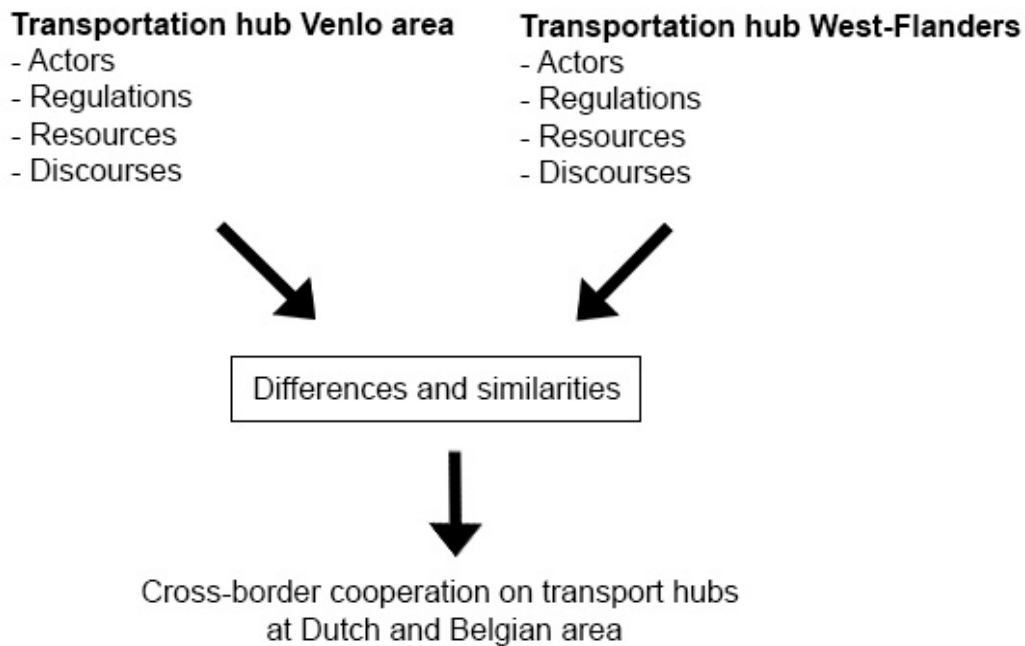


Figure 5

Conceptual model (own figure).

When creating a conceptual model the theoretic framework should be used in order to create a clear model. Information out of the theoretic framework and the introductory chapter should be sufficient to understand this conceptual model (*Figure 5*). This conceptual model shows that the starting point of this study is the comparison between the transport hub in the Netherlands and the one in Belgium. The dimensions actors, regulations, resources and discourses from the Policy Arrangement Approach are used to identify the differences and similarities between the two transportation hubs. This study is using the Oost-West Poort as a case study and the differences between the transportation hub in Venlo and the one in West-Flanders will be examined as shown in the top of *Figure 5*. The main purpose of this study is to find similarities and differences between transport hubs that use cross-border cooperation and determine to which extent they contribute to efficiency. These differences and similarities are illustrated in the middle of *Figure 5*. Differences and similarities can help us to conclude whether they favor the cooperation between the two transportations hubs or not. This is shown at the bottom of *Figure 5*. Not all differences between transport hubs are necessarily bad for the cooperation and not all similarities are necessarily in favor of it, because of this it is important that it gets discussed.

3. Methodology

In the previous chapters of this study the topic was given together with the research objectives and research questions. Now when the goal of this study is clear, there should also be answers on how to reach that. The methodology chapter will clarify how the information will be gathered in order to answer the research questions. This includes the clarification on which research technique will be used and how the needed data will be obtained. This chapter will start with elaborating the research strategy which will be followed by the elaboration of the used research materials.

3.1. Research strategy

In this study there is chosen to use a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory and can provide insights into underlying reasons, opinions and motivations (Creswell, 2013). This form of research makes it possible to dive deep into the subject. Qualitative research fits well with the research questions because it has research methods that can elaborate one specific case, while a quantitative method is more focused on generating numerical data and statistics from large samples (Creswell, 2013). Another reason why it is fitting with qualitative research is that there are not many cross-border cooperations between transportation hubs that are focused on road transport. This makes it impossible to create sufficient amount of data to analyze with a quantitative method. Furthermore, the cooperation between these transport hubs are complex and it is hard to find enough information without doing in-depth interviews with important actors. Important actors have inside knowledge of the project which is necessary in order to get understandings of the similarities and differences between the transport hubs. This information is best gathered using qualitative research.

A case study will be used as research method to get a better understanding of the practices within the cross-border cooperation on transportation hubs. George and Benett (2005) define a case study as: *“The detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events”*. In depth information about similarities and differences that will be gained from this case study can be used to learn from. According to Creswell (2013) is this type of case study is called a single instrumental case study. A single case study implies that there is one specific issue illustrated by one case study (Creswell, 2012). An instrumental case study provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. It does not necessarily help to understand a particular situation completely, but it grants useful information (Stake, 1995). There are not many cross-border cooperations between transport hubs focused on roads. This means that

these cases are not as typical as other cases. When still insight and information wants to be gained from these cases, then an instrumental casestudy is fitting (Stake, 1995). Although a single instrumental case study can provide much information, there is also a small issue with this type of method, namely the generalizability. Because the gained knowledge is dependent on one case it is not so fitting for the generalization (Vennix, 2011). Specific methods of data collection can diminish the generalizability shortcoming. One of these methods of data collection is triangulation. In this study data will be collected through different ways, namely interviews and reports. Observation is another method of data collection which can be very useful, but in this study it would not add value to the data. The reason for this is that the official Oost-West Poort cooperation has already ended. This does not mean that the involved actors are not cooperating anymore, but it does mean that there are less meetings which could be useful to observation. During the timeframe of this study there was no opportunity to do observations which could add data to the study.

3.2 Research materials

This section contains information about methods of data collecting and analysis, which is done with regard to the single instrumental case study. Why and how information is contained in this way will be discussed. As well as motivation for the method of analysing that has been chosen.

3.2.1 Desk research

A part of the collected information has been obtained by desk research. This means that information of existing literature will be used. This study started with desk research in order to learn more about the topic. The desk research is very useful because it enables the researcher to get a broad view on the topic that is researched (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2015). Furthermore, it is fairly easy to obtain and it is a different way of information collection, so it helps to make the research more generalizable. When more and different sources of data are collected it improves the triangulation within the project, which makes the research more reliable. An advantage of desk research is that it enables the researcher and the reader to get a broad range of information about the situation of the topic before the empirical aspects are implemented (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2015). This means that it is also useful for the researcher to start early with desk research on the chosen topic. This is a reason why the desk research has been done on three different moments. At first, there has been done research on the important concepts and theories of the topic. Secondly, this was complemented with additional literature study and with more in depth information about the case study region Oost-West Poort. Next to the literature that is needed based on the topic,

also information based on the case study itself is needed. This includes information that is specifically related to the Oost-West Poort. This means that for instance information based on regulations in the countries are researched in this stage. It is possible to find information about this on government websites, for example on the 'Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport' which stands for 'Inspection Living Environment and Transport' (Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport, n.d.). Furthermore, there are websites and documents about the laws and regulations towards road transport of goods available (wetten.overheid.nl, 2017). Documents about the Oost-West Poort itself will also be important. On the website of Oost-West Poort several documents can be found, as well as on the website of POM West-Flanders. POM West-Flanders is a privatized agency that executes the social-economic policy of the province. The third stage of desk research started based on the interviews that were held. The interviews were able to give new information for which it would be useful to add more literature to the existing information. This stage of the desk research added information to this study which was not seen as important before the interviews, but eventually proved to be important.

3.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are an important part of this study. Kvale (1983) states that the purpose of a qualitative research interview is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. Interviews offer the possibility to ask questions on thoughts, feelings and wishes (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2015). Sudden questions can offer these true thoughts, feelings and wishes because interviewees do not have much time to think and discuss the answers. Because of this interviews can reveal information that is not obtainable by desk research.

The interviews that were held are semi-structured interviews. An advantage of this interview method is that it offers an open communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. Furthermore, this technique ensures that all the important questions are asked because of the base questions in the interview guide. When something interesting or unexpected occurs during the interview there is also the opportunity to intervene and deepen further into this part (Schmidt, 2004). The interview guide used in this study is build up out of different parts. It starts with some general questions, meant to get the interviewee talking and obtain a quick understanding of the background. After that it has a series of questions based on each sub-question. When arranging the interviews I aimed for a face to face interview due to the synchronous communication. The method of synchronous communication makes it possible to take advantage of social cues, unlike other interview methods (Opdenakker, 2006).

Based on data collection one can say the more interviews, the better it is. But within

this time frame there were choices to make, because interviews are very time consuming. I have not only tried to select the most important actors, but the actors that can give the most information, which is based on the desk research. These organisations are the municipality of Venlo, Greenport Venlo, POM West-Flanders and University of Maastricht. Greenport Venlo and POM West-Flanders were chosen because they are two very important organisations in the initiation of the Oost-West Poort cooperation. This means that they should have visions and ideas about how the cooperation should be like, this was something where I was very interested in. Municipality Venlo was chosen because they are as a municipality connected to the government. I was interested in how and why municipality Venlo is supporting the Oost-West Poort. The last interview was held with the University of Maastricht. The reason for doing this interview is because there was fairly little information about the educational organisations available for this project through desk research. I was interested in what the knowledge institutes as the universities exactly did in the project and what their motivation was to cooperate with it. Unfortunately it was not possible to interview all organisations face to face. This was not possible because of the narrow schedules of the interviewees. Municipality Venlo and Greenport Venlo were face to face interviews, while POM West-Flanders and University of Maastricht were interviewed using the telephone.

Table 2

Information about respondents

Name	Organisation	Date
Heidi Hanssens	POM West-Flanders	May 17, 2017
Ingrid Vermeer	Greenport Venlo	May 23, 2017
Jos Hensgens	Municipality Venlo	May 24, 2017
Jan-Jaap Semeijn	Maastricht University	June 5, 2017

3.3 Method of data analysis

After all the data has been collected, it should be ordered and analyzed. There are different scientific methods to analyze qualitative research. When the interviews were transcribed I chose to code them. The coding has been done with the program Atlas.ti. The codes got attached to parts of the interview and made it easier to compare interviews with each other. Besides this, it created a structure in which the important parts of the interview were organized and easy to find back. All the codes attached to parts of the interview matched one of the different dimensions of the PAA. Because of this the codes were in line with the layout of the interview guide, which is set up based on the dimensions of the PAA. The interviews and the codes were able to give new information. This made it useful to add more literature to it. Because of this I chose to quote sentences of the interviewees so readers can see if it is in line with the literature. Besides that, the quotations helped to get the most reliable information out of the interviews, which is necessary when not all the desired organisations could be interviewed. It helps to increase the reliability of the project because the interpretation from the researcher is not able to change the data as how it is used in the study (Creswell, 2012). A disadvantage is that the interviews were held in Dutch while this study is written in English. This means that I had to translate the quotes. This has been done as realistic as possible. The advantage that I had as Dutch speaking person was something I had to use because it is also the main language of the interviewees. This means that the interviewees are not limited on their language skills to what extent they are able to exchange the information that they possess.

4. Analysis

In this chapter each sub-question will be answered based on the gathered empirical data from desk research and interviews. This will be done based on the important aspects of the policy arrangement approach. Each important aspect, which are also sub-questions, will be discussed in a separate paragraph. In the first paragraphs the involved actors will be discussed to get a clear overview about the involved people and parties. This will be followed up by regulations, resources and discourses to gather the information that is needed to answer the main question of this study.

4.1. Contribution of actors

At the Oost-West Poort are multiple actors from different countries involved. The cooperation between these actors arose from the subsidy scheme from Interreg. Interreg is an European subsidy provider to support cross-border cooperation. Because the subsidy that could be gained from Interreg some of the actors saw opportunities for a cooperation that could be beneficial for everybody. With other words, the subsidy from the interreg programme was the starting point of the creation of this cooperation. At first, I will give information about the Belgian partners and after that the Dutch partners will be addressed. Next to the original partners there are also other actors involved, but in order to get an understanding of the Oost-West Poort it is more useful to discuss the partners first. After that I will discuss the other actors that had a role within the Oost-West Poort cooperation. At the end of this chapter there will be more information given about the cross-border cooperation between the actors and the sub-question will be answered.

4.1.1. Belgian partners

The initial driving force and actor who saw a chance for cooperation is the Belgian agency POM West-Flanders (Oost-West Poort, 2014). POM West-Flanders is an agency of the province West-Flanders who carries out the economic policy of the province. This includes a wide variety of tasks, for example the support of entrepreneurs, support of businesses and efficient organisation of transportation and logistic activity. The main focus from POM West-Flanders are transportation projects and logistics (Oost-West Poort, 2014). *“POM West-Flanders has often cross-border projects and needs to work together with other European partners which are most of the time located in France, The Netherlands, Scandinavia and England. As a public actor with experience in cross-border cooperation POM West-Flanders was able to take contact and establish a cooperation with multiple actors”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). West-Flanders is focussing on the distribution of goods towards the West, namely towards England and North-France. Because of this POM

West-Flanders has created their vision about the area and it is called 'West-Poort'. Within this vision POM West-Flanders states that there cannot be a competitive production device without an efficient reliable and sustainable logistic system, tailored to the needs of the forward-looking industry (pomwvl.be, n.d.). POM West-Flanders therefore strongly focuses on the further development of the logistics sector and the expansion of West-Flanders into a prestigious logistics hub. The optimization of logistic flows can save the industry a lot of costs, furthermore it leads to better logistics and a lower carbon footprint (ITF, 2015). POM West-Flanders performs as a facilitator or neutral match maker in several projects in order to better match the demand from the industry towards the supply from the transport logistics sector. The Oost-West Poort project is one of them (pomwvl.be, n.d.). Furthermore, POM West-Flanders states that an innovative and knowledge-driven logistics sector is crucial to anchor the logistics flows and the many activities and services in West Flanders. POM is setting up West-Flanders for strategic cooperation with different knowledge institutes, such as university Vives. The goal of this is to bring logistical improvements close to the transport and logistics sector (pomwvl.be, n.d.).

University Vives is one of the partners within the Oost-West Poort cooperation. University Vives offers competence-based higher education, innovative practice-oriented research and social services for an answer to social challenges. As a knowledge institute Vives has knowledge about different aspects such as transport, logistics and cooperation that could prove useful during the project in multiple ways. Vives mostly does practice oriented research and less fundamental research. Goal of this is to increase the knowledge infrastructure in the Oost-West Poort (Oost-West Poort, 2014).

The other partner from Belgian side is the REO auction. REO is a cultivation organisation that is located in the centre of West-Flanders and is the only private partner on the Belgian side of the cooperation. West-Flanders has a moderate sea climate with good soil conditions, because of this West-Flanders is called "de moestuin van Europa", in English this means the kitchen garden of Europe. REO makes full use of these circumstances. With around 3.000 members of small and middle sized companies REO forms a big unit on the market of fresh products. REO is responsible for sales from the fresh products of the members. On a normal day REO commercializes 600 tons of fresh products, and this 6 times a week (oostwestpoort.eu, n.d.). REO can help the producers of the fresh products in various ways, which makes REO an important partner for the cooperation. Firstly, REO has a good understanding of the market situation, especially around the products in which the producers are active. Furthermore, REO has knowledge about the expectations of the consumers of the products. Because of this the producers can more accurately adapt their products to the expectations. In the third place, REO has a quality control so consumers of the products know that the products are from good quality. And finally, REO has influence in the scientific

aspects of the activities and products that are from importance within this branch (reo.be, n.d.). With the wide palette of products, REO Auction distinguishes itself from other horticultural auctions in Europe. This varied range also translates into a fairly even distribution of product offerings in both summer and winter, allowing for wholesalers, exporters or distributors over the four seasons to purchase quality fruit and vegetables at the REO Auction (reo.be, n.d.).

4.1.2 Dutch partners

An important partner on the Dutch side is Greenport Venlo. *“The goal of Greenport Venlo is to strengthen the business climate in different sectors in the region around Venlo, this region is also known as Noord-Limburg. The important sectors for Greenport Venlo to focus on are logistics, agro-industry and bio waste. Stimulation of businesses locations and employment opportunities in the area is one of the tasks of Greenport Venlo”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). Next to this Greenport Venlo also values the environmental state and durability of the region (oostwestpoort.eu, n.d.). The cooperation between actors in the Oost-West Poort is based on efficiency with a main focus on the financial side, but the project is also shifting boundaries on the environmental side, which Greenport Venlo values (Oost-West Poort, 2014). Greenport Venlo is a public actor and because they want to attract business and employment opportunities towards Noord-Limburg it is important that the logistics in the area are developing. It creates the opportunity to gain a broader sales market, which is beneficial for the companies Greenport Venlo is aiming to attract. Just like POM West-Flanders has Greenport Venlo also taken a guiding role within the project. This means that Greenport Venlo also saw opportunities for collaboration in an early stage and helped setting up the project (Oost-West Poort, 2014). Greenport Venlo has a lot of connections with businesses and institutions in the surroundings, this simplifies the ability of the Oost-West Poort to attract useful actors and partners for the project.

Another partner is the municipality Venlo. *“The municipality has a broad variety of tasks they need to carry out, but municipality Venlo beliefs it is important to explore and improve the already strong sectors”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). As already said in the previous paragraph, important sectors for the area around Venlo are agro-industry and logistics. The region is the largest and most important Dutch hinterland connection and junction between mainports Rotterdam, Antwerp and Duisburg. An important part of the goods from the ports are further processed in the Venlo region (oostwestpoort.eu, n.d.). In the last decade municipality Venlo has always been chosen as one of the most important logistic hotspots in the Netherlands. In the years 2015 and 2016 Venlo was even chosen as the number one logistic hotspot, which shows the importance of the transportation hub (logistiek.nl, 2016). This prestige did not come out of nowhere, because municipality

Venlo is giving a lot of attention for their policy towards this sector. Oost-West Poort is a project with exactly the focus on these important sectors in Venlo (Oost-West Poort, 2014). Because of this the municipality Venlo agreed to cooperate in the Oost-West Poort project. *“Municipality Venlo has been asked to cooperate in the Oost-West Poort because of their expertise and knowledge in the area”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

Just as on the Belgian side there are also knowledge institutes on the Dutch side of the project, namely Fontys university and the university of Maastricht. The difference between these two knowledge institutes is that Fontys university is focussing more on the practical side of education while the university of Maastricht is active on the research side of education (Oost-West Poort, 2014). Just as with the Vives university there is an interplay of knowledge going on between the university and other actors. When participating in the Oost-West Poort student exchanges between the areas becomes a more viable option. Because both areas are focusing on more or less the same strengths it becomes also more likely to be able to organize common courses, minors and just exchanges in information and students (Oost-West Poort, 2014).

4.1.3 Other important actors

Next to the partners were also other actors involved in the Oost-West Poort cooperation. These actors were involved in the cooperation, but were not involved in the management part. One of these actors is the cultivation company Weyers. Weyers has an establishment in Venlo and in Weeze (Germany). Weyers attaches great importance to good trade relations with the producers. In addition, an extensive service package is seen as important. Proper packaging, good logistics, professional marketing support, certified quality management and a closed track & trace system are essential for Weyers (weyersgmbh.de, n.d.). A direct line between end user and manufacturer or supplier ensures optimum matching of supply and demand, both in terms of quality and quantity. This shows that the supply chain is very important for Weyers. Creation of such a steady supply chain can be reached with the help of the Oost-West Poort (Oost-West Poort, 2014). Another important cultivation company is Frankort & Koning. Just as Weyers does Frankort & Koning belief that a reliable supply chain and good quality products are some of the most important aspects of their tasks (frankort.nl, n.d.).

The most important actor for the transport of the goods within the project is Franken transport. Franken transport is a company that is located north of Venlo close to the German border. Franken transport states that they do not only want to devote their own knowledge and experience for quality improvements of the customers, but also want to use their knowledge and position to deal with the environment in a responsible way. Franken transport states the following: *“Sustainability is our focus and we want to keep innovating.*

We claim not to be the most green transport company, but we think so with our customers in order to be socially responsible" (Frankentransport.nl, n.d.). This includes information about loading and unloading at different locations, routes traveled, temperature expirations on certain transportations and fuel consumption. Franken transport screens all this information to make the right balance between efficiency and responsibility on the one side, and a conscious enterprise at the other side.

4.1.4 Reasons for cross-border cooperation

Now it is crucial to understand what foundations were present that caused opportunities and need for a cooperation in the Oost-West Poort. This section will clarify why the cooperation came to an existence.

The Oost-West Poort cooperation is aimed at beneficial results for all partners and actors involved in the cooperation. This means that none of the actors participate in the cooperation to defend their current interest in the activities, but only to strengthen the aspects that are seen as most important (Oost-West Poort, 2014). This means that it is necessary to work with the help of the cooperation to a certain goal or vision which is beneficial for all actors. The two regions around the transportation hubs Venlo and West-Flanders are very similar on the focus branches which creates a situation in which certain visions will be beneficial for these branches. When looking into the actors individually, there can be seen that multiple see the environment and sustainability as an important aspect of their work (Oost-West Poort, 2014). The actors POM West-Flanders, Greenport Venlo, Municipality Venlo, Frankort & Koning, Weyers and Franken Transport all have visions in which the environment plays an important role. It has been suggested in previous literature that shared vision encompasses many aspects of a cooperative relationship. The concept of shared vision is often used to refer to mutual goals, shared values and the understanding of this in a cooperative relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Parsons, 2002). In this sense a shared vision should help simplify and improve the cooperation. Due to similarities in branches, goals and interests there is definitely a shared vision present in the Oost-West Poort. *"The economic situation in the 2 regions are very much alike. Both are heavily focused on logistics and the food industry. So in this sense there are lot of similarities, but also complementarities. The regions have a sufficient distance from each other in terms of logistics and transport to not compete with one another. The need for competing would be different if the hubs were closer together, like Antwerp and Rotterdam"* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017).

Products that were mainly transported in the Oost-West Poort cannot be stored for a long time. Products that were transported the most are vegetables, fruit and plants. *"These products need to be fast on the place of destination, this is a reason why it is so important to*

have a good connection between Venlo and West-Flanders” (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). Customers of the products could only buy rather small amounts each time. It was a problem that trucks were hard fill and it was difficult to acquire a constant stream of truck transportation towards customers. *“Products which were transported in the Oost-West Poort needed to be in stores fast and were not able to be moved by train or ship because this would take too much time”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). The similarities and dependency on road transport brought both transportation hubs together.

Now there will be two direct reasons highlighted that made sure the Oost-West Poort cooperation came to an existence. The areas involved in the Oost-West Poort have a good road network available, as well as a focus branche that is really well suited for this kind of transport. Because of this are actors in these regions eager to use the opportunities that the road transport is offering. *“POM West-Flanders and Greenport Venlo saw that opportunities were missed, in order to gain these opportunities POM West-Flanders and Greenport Venlo led up to a cooperation”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). Next to this, there is another reason why Oost-West Poort cooperation came to arise, namely the availability of Interreg funding. Interreg helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop a better policy that is focused on interregional cooperation (Interreg Europe n.d.). Oost-West Poort qualified for Interreg A funding. *“Regularly Interreg funding is used because the funding is appealing, but when the funding stops often collaboration ends ... Oost-West Poort is a project in which the funding was a necessity for the initiation of the cooperation, but when this was done, contacts between the actors were exchanged and remain useful for the transportation of goods”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). So the availability of Interreg was an occurrence that led up to the cooperation.

4.1.5 Cooperation

This section will function as an answer to the first sub-question. All the interviewed actors describe the Oost-West Poort cooperation as a successful and nice cooperation (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017; J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017; J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017; H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Actors had similar ideas and visions pretty fast. *“Because everybody wanted to go in the same direction we were able to get to understand our partners better in a relatively quick period of time”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). In order to reach this several meetings were arranged with all the partners to discuss what had to be done. Next to this the Oost-West Poort also found it important to get to know and understand the partners better. *“In an early stage of the cooperation it got visible that not all partners would have an equivalent role in the cooperation. There were indispensable*

partners, partners who would have a guiding role and partners with a less active, but with a facilitating and advisory role. We knew this early and accepted this after the discussions” (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

As said before, the Oost-West Poort cooperation started by POM West-Flanders and Greenport Venlo as the initial organisations and driving powers behind the project. Both organisations were aiming to find fitting partners in their country to cooperate with. The Interreg funding could help with finding partners because this made it more appealing on the financial side. When partners were found these two organisations continued their dominant role in the project. Especially POM West-Flanders, because they did a lot of reporting that is needed for the Interreg funding. This costed a lot of time, organisation and planning. *“POM West-Flanders has done multiple international Interreg projects, because of this experience we are able to support our partners with the Interreg duties”* H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017).

Another partner with a very important and indispensable role was REO auction. REO was indispensable because it is an organisation where lots of organisations are attached to. From REO auction came a big part of the products that needed to be transported. *“Without REO it would be very time consuming and costly to make arrangements with all these small organisations individually”* (J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017). The same applies for Greenport Venlo, multiple organisations are attached to the campus and industrial estate which is developed by Greenport Venlo. *“The auction in West-Flanders and industrial estate in Venlo are places which lie very central within the project, it are points from which work is done. This makes them very important partners in the Oost-West Poort project”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

Another partner, municipality Venlo, was less present in the cooperation to take on action. Municipality Venlo was able to find actors to work with and was present at all the meetings. The municipality did exchange information and had a facilitating role, but when looking at the scale of the whole project, then can be said that other actors were of much more importance. *“We as municipality Venlo took a subordinate role in the cooperation. We chose to do this because there are already multiple public organisations deeply involved in the project. We think a lot of the cooperation should come from private organisations who also have the in depth knowledge of the logistics”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

The universities involved in the project also had a rather subordinate role in the projects, at least when looking into the transport aspect of the cooperation. *“The cooperation was for the universities especially successful on cultural aspects. It is important that people from the different areas learn more about each other. The cooperation showed through visits from other universities that there are different ways of educating and differences in lifestyle of*

students" (J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017). Besides this were the universities not very important for the transportation aspect of the project, in which this study is interested. Just as municipality Venlo states the university of Maastricht that the knowledge of the logistics is already present at the private businesses.

Other actors that were not partners, but important for the cooperation are the cultivation companies Weyers and Frankort & Koning. These cultivation companies were involved as the producer of products which were transported with the 'transport shuttle' that was created by the Oost-West Poort cooperation. The transport shuttle is seen as a very feasible and clear achievement of the Oost-West Poort. This are shuttle busses which pendle between West-Flanders and Venlo loaded with products (POM West-Flanders, 2013).

Next to the cultivation companies, was also Franken transport from importance, the company that managed the transport. Cooperation between the cultivation and transport companies had to be on point in order to achieve the effective stream of goods. The merge of forces from these companies fits within their vision and way of working, namely care for environment, good quality and a reliable supply chain. These companies were attracted for their vision, which can explain why the cooperation on the transport shuttle was successful (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Parsons, 2002).

4.2 Influence of regulations

This section will give an answer to the third sub-question and will discuss what regulations had a big impact in the Oost-West Poort. The presence of these regulations create a situation for the Oost-West Poort in which all actors need to handle according to these rules. Galbreath & Lamoreaux (2009) state that improving transport networks can help to lower these barriers in very practical ways. By first discussing formal rules and after that informal rules this section will show how Oost-West Poort handled these regulations.

4.2.1 Different kind of rules

Rules can make it hard for organisations to collaborate with potential partners in other countries. This can be because certain rules restrict them to collaborate, but it can also be because of informal rules. When trying to understand the differences of formal and informal rules it leads us to the differences in how these rules are created (Pacheco et al., 2008). Formal rules are usually consciously designed and written down, such as laws. Informal rules tend to evolve over time in a spontaneous way as a result of human interaction. Certain behavior patterns and local norms which are seen as beneficial by actors are expected to be used by other actors as well (Skoog, 2005). Informal rules are not written down, yet they are widely accepted codes, norms and routines within countries. They do not directly impede trade, but they make it more difficult by imposing standards and requirements that cannot be met by foreign exporters (Pacheco et al., 2008). The Interreg programs exist for cooperation projects on border areas and is especially created to support these kind of collaborations and overcome difficulties at the border. The Oost-West Poort project is qualified to use funding from Interreg to connect these regulations from Belgium and the Netherlands better to each other. The following part of this section will clarify that in the Oost-Poort informal rules are maybe even more important than formal rules.

4.2.2 Formal rules

“Rules concerning transport, emissions, excise duty, customs and taxes are all related to this collaboration and are important to consider in the Oost-West Poort” (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Governments create rules within their country, those rules are often based on national interests. When parties from different countries collaborate often problems exist from the different rules. In an optimally organised world all these rules would connect with each other, but in reality this is not the case (goodcountry.org, 2015).

“Transportation connections often struggle with differences in rules and infrastructure that is created from it. Especially train connections are often not compatible and make collaborations near to impossible, but road transportation offers more possibilities for

cooperation. Road transport is less dependent on the infrastructure and rules. This strength of the road transport is something that Oost-West Poort wanted to use" (H. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

A problem caused by the different laws of Belgium and the Netherlands was the allowed length of trucks. The initial idea of the Oost-West Poort was to make use of extra long trucks, also known as LHV trucks. These trucks could transport more products than the normal trucks because there is more space and the truck is allowed to be heavier. This was useful because less trucks should have to drive towards the destinations. Advantages of this are that it would save financial costs. Another advantage, an ecological one, is that less trucks also mean less emissions. As told in the previous chapter, a lot of the actors involved in the Oost-West Poort see the environment as a very important part of the cooperation. Therefore, it was unfortunate that differences in laws of Belgium and the Netherlands made it impossible to use these trucks that could efficiently transport products to the destinations. The problem has to do with laws about the allowed length of the trucks and where these trucks are allowed to be driven. *Figure 6* shows several possible combinations of trailers, the upper two trucks in the figure are from importance for this study. Usually trucks in Belgium and the Netherlands are allowed to be 18,75 meters, so according to *figure 6* it should be possible to use two trailers of 7,82 meters in the Netherlands as well as in Belgium. *"A merge between a Dutch auction and one in Germany created the situation in which trucks had to drive a few kilometer across the border. In Germany is the length of these trucks not allowed, because of this the trucks could not be loaded"* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). This meant that it was not an option anymore to use the LHV trucks. *"As a province with political connections we are not able to change these laws, we knew that as soon as we encountered this problem. Actors within the project just had to accept it and look into other options"* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). After consultation with the actors that were concerned with the LHV trucks the conclusion came that there was no other valid option than to use the 'normal trucks'. *"Because we could use the normal trucks it was not an insurmountable obstacle, but it is unfortunate that those little obstacles are still there and create difficulties"* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

Other differences in rules had to do with the excise duty in Belgium. It showed that there are parts in the law that are totally not connected with other countries. *"The law in Belgium made it possible to not pay excise duty for trucks"* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). This is not a problem for the Oost-West Poort, but it is not as favorable as it seems. *Laws keep changing and it creates a lot of administration and work for us... Almost everything that has to do with excise duty, customs, VAT, emissions or transport has influence on the way we are organised*" (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). This means that actors must be constantly aware of the laws, changes in laws and

also the possibility of hindrances imposed by new laws. This is very time consuming, besides that, actors also take a risk because new laws can hinder the collaboration.

So, within the Oost-West Poort there were not much laws that hindered the cooperation, but there were laws and changes in laws that in a sense discouraged the cooperation. The reason for this is the need of constant monitoring for new laws and law changes. This is very time consuming and actors need to take risks that the collaboration will not be disturbed by changes.

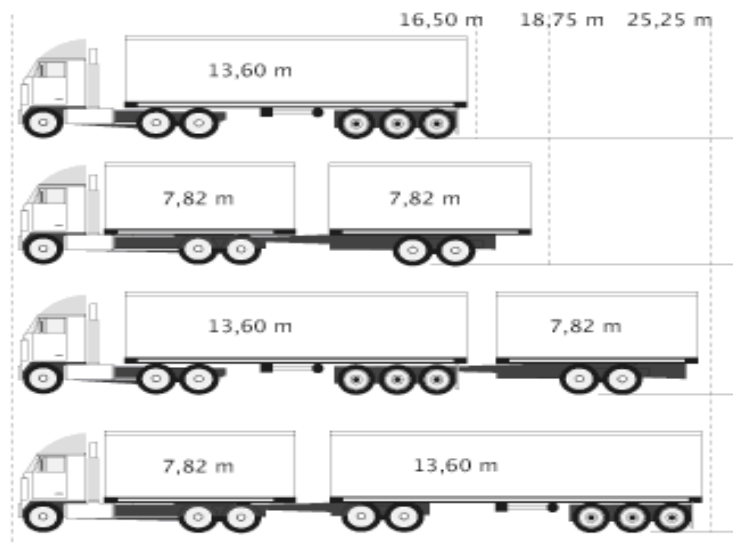


Figure 6

Dimensions of vehicle combinations: standard and LHV. Reprinted from Wisnicki & Galor (2007).

4.2.3. Informal rules

Informal rules are rules that are probably even more challenging to overcome than formal rules, which are written down. Reasons for the discontinues effect at borders have to do with practical problems created out of the formal rules, but informal rules also definitely play a role in this. These days there is one world market, but often countries, its businesses and people are very focused on the country they live in. Barriers created through government regulations that are imposed on organisations that do not know these rules and makes it hard to trade are the so called “soft barriers” (Nilsson, Eskilsson & Ek, 2010). The bottomline is that because of this process soft barriers are created. This means that people have less knowledge of other countries and are less likely to cooperate with them. *“Individually businesses tend to look more towards their own country when doing business. When businesses are clustered together in a hub it gets easier to look outside the country towards a bigger scale ... Advantages of being in a hub also is that help is often received from public organisations because they benefit from the presence of these businesses. As public actors*

we are looking for opportunities for the region. In the Oost-West Poort project we saw opportunities in breaking through the inland view and expand the reach of the hub around Venlo" (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). Informal rules are hard to totally overcome, but an intensive cooperation with a lot of contact helps actors to get to know each other better. By doing this it is possible to overcome the soft barrier, which helps to improve cross-border cooperation.

To summarize the influence of regulations, formal rules can definitely cause problems in the Oost-West Poort, but involved actors do not have the authority to change these rules. The only option that the actors have is to look for other options to reduce the problems. Next to this, formal rules generate a lot of time loss and risks, because actors must constantly be aware of changes in these rules. Informal rules also showed to be hard to deal with, because actors had insufficient knowledge of other regions and this creates barriers for collaboration.

4.3 Influence of resources

This section will be about the resources within the Oost-West Poort and will answer the third sub-question of this study. Resources are often described as 'power' because the possession of resources grants influence that can be used over other actors (Larrue, Hegger & Trémorin, 2013). This paragraph exist out of the different assets of resources that exist according to Veenman, Liefferink & Arts (2009), namely money, knowledge, authority and technology. These assets will be elaborated one by one to determine the importance of these resources, as well as their influence on the project.

4.3.1 Financial Resources

Projects in general need to have enough financial resources (Larrue, Hegger & Trémorin, 2013). The availability of financial resources make it possible to invest this money in a cooperation. The Oost-West Poort is for a large part funded out of Interreg money. Interreg is not a partner or active within the project, but merely a resource for money (Oost-West Poort, 2014). In this sense does the funding not create an imbalance in influence or power because none of the actors have right to claim it. *"Interreg pays 50% of the costs made by actors back to them. Interreg sends this money to one partner and in this case that was POM West-Flanders. The problem with this is that in a cooperation project it is often not very clear who deserves the money"* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Multiple actors were working together in the Oost-West Poort. There is a lot of interaction between them, therefore it is hard to determine who is responsible for what. This makes it hard to determine which actor has more right on the funding than others. *"We wanted a fair distribution of the finances. If company X orders more goods than company Y, then company X should get more benefits from the funding. But it was difficult to manage this and determine how much which company should get. Eventually we had to create a settlement method that could do this"* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). After consultation with the actors this settlement method met the requirements and the actors were pleased with the funding that they received. So, this problem definitely caused some uproar between the actors, but it was not something that created long lasting problems.

According to the interviewed actors this was actually not the only difficult aspect of Interreg to deal with. *"Interreg projects can be very appealing, because they can reach and financially assist a lot of actors. A lot of what is done in these Interreg cooperations need to be reported. Reporting this consumes a lot of time and nothing of the funding is guaranteed yet"* (J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017). Some of the organisations involved in the Oost-West Poort had done Interreg projects before, because of this they were able to assist the companies that had no experience in it. *"When doing Interreg projects, the different*

actors know they are very dependent on each other. Everybody has to make a certain amount of hours and need to send the correct reports. If this is not done properly the Interreg funding can get reduced or stopped. Because of this it is important that organisations only proceed in projects if they have faith in the other actors and in the project as a whole." (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). It would be a pity for the actors if parts of the financial spendings would not be funded by Interreg. The financial situation is an important aspects that businesses try to improve with cooperation like this. The Oost-West Poort showed that it was important to get to know all actors very well. The one on one conversations and conversations as a group helped to trust each other when the actors are dependent on each other. In the end the Oost-West Poort got the desired funding by Interreg and all the actors met the requirements. *"Next to interreg, another big part of the financing was done by the provinces West-Flanders and Limburg. These provinces are not partners in the project but did help with financing"* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Once again are these actors not involved in the project themselves and because of this they did not create power differences within the project.

The other part of the financial resources came from actors that had to do these spendings because they were necessary for the actors to do their jobs. This is logical, because the Oost-West Poort project is aimed at efficient cooperation, which is created through smooth collaboration from actors (Oost-West Poort, 2014). This is where value is created and where the previous called fundings are mostly invested in. Investments aimed at one organisations is afterall not the best way to create efficient collaboration. So, the part that is left are the jobs of the organisations itself, which are doing the things they already did before, only with better connections because of the Oost-West Poort. *"The financial possessions of the actors were not equal, but it did not lead to an imbalance in power. The goal of the project was clear. There were plans made in which everybody would profit. When this is the case power gets less important"* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

4.3.2 Knowledge Resources

Interviews showed what actors saw as the most important research they could offer each other, namely knowledge (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017; J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017; J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017; H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). This includes knowledge on specific work related aspects of their job, but also the connections that are created between the actors (Oost-West Poort, 2014). *"Resources that were especially important were the people. The Oost-West Poort is not a project where large investments for machines and material costed a lot. It was a project in which the people, the staff was used on a large*

scale. *The manpower was actually the most important resource in the project*” (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). The advantages of manpower are the connections that it makes and the ability to bring different actors together. *“Knowledge is the economic tissue in the branch of transport and logistics. So knowledge is important for bringing businesses together and for community creation. I see it as the source of this project”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Knowledge of the actors was not evenly divided in the project, but the knowledge of both transportation hubs as a whole was fairly even distributed.

On the educational aspect of the project, in which the universities are involved there were differences in knowledge and different ways of educating. *“The education of the regions is aimed at agrologistics. We could see that on this subject more knowledge was available at the Dutch universities”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). *“We did not encounter power differences because of this. The goal of this project was to create more together. I do not see a point in misusing the power one should get from having much knowledge in projects like this. I do not think anybody would benefit from this, because there are always some things you can learn from others”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). This way of thinking is also in line with the shared vision that the involved actors have. *“There was no rivalry between the universities. The universities are located too far from each other too have competition. On this part of the project it was more interesting to compare the culture and ways of educating to find out what can be learned from each other”* (J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017).

The transport side of the project had a better distribution of the knowledge. *“I believe that POM West-Flanders had more experience and knowledge than Greenport Venlo on how collaboration that has to do with transport should be arranged between different companies. On this aspect could the Dutch side learn more from the Belgian side”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Next to Greenport Venlo, also municipality Venlo played a big role in the knowledge contribution for the Dutch side. Municipality Venlo took a supporting and facilitating role as said the in previous paragraphs, but also has much knowledge about collaborations and organisations in the region. *“I don’t think there were much power differences. Our goal was to eliminate this. Of course some actors were more important than others but this did not led to power differences. As I said before, we had a lot of consultation and wrote this all down to come to a clear agreement. Companies that gave more and had a bigger budget did also profit more from the cooperation”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

4.3.3 Authority Resources

The Resources authority and technology were less important assets to possess in the Oost-West Poort project. Authority can be important when organisations are very dominant on certain aspects. According to Veenman, Liefferink & Arts (2009) is the authority mainly the political influence the actors have. *“As a province with political connections on a provincial scale we are not able to change these laws. We knew that as soon as we encountered this problem. Actors within the project just had to accept it and look into other options”* (H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). So based on political influence and connections it points out that municipality Venlo and POM West-Flanders should have more authority than other actors, but Hanssens also said that the connections they had could not help the cooperation to tackle the problems that occurred. In that sense it is hard to determine how important authority was for the project. The interviews itself showed that actors were not aware of any power differences created through authority (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017; J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017; J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017; H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Hensgens did say the following about the public actors attached to the government: *“In projects it is important to have some of these organisations, because it automatically creates some prestige and confirmation that the local authorities support the project”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017).

4.3.4 Technology Resources

The next resource that will be discussed is the technology resource. Technology resources is not what this cooperation is all about. The goal was to make the transportation more efficient and technology was not able to help with this. *“The transportation companies already have the knowledge they need about their job related technology. There is not much what can be learned on this aspect”* (J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017). Technology was not an important asset that had much tribute to the interrelationships that have been created. Therefore, it was not very important for the project and did the actors not experience power differences on this aspect. *“On technologic aspect the thing that has been done is the purchase of machines that could help to simplify the loading process of the trucks”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). So, there has been some change in technological aspect. New machines for the businesses have been purchased that otherwise would not have happened. This was a collective investment and unable to create power shifts.

To summarize the influence of regulations, financial and knowledge resources showed to be

far more important than authority and technology. The Oost-West Poort is aimed at efficiency through good communication and joint investments. In order to reach this the knowledge resource proved to be key. Next to this is the financial resource was important to sustain and grow as a transportation hub.

4.4 Influence of discourses

This section will clarify the effect discourses had on the Oost-West Poort. Dryzek (1997) has defined discourses as a set of concepts, ideas and narratives that give meaning to a certain phenomenon. Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing and speaking that are accepted as instantiations by particular identities of specific groups (Gee, 2015). Based on scientific paradigms, means for communicating and cultural discourses differences and similarities of the discourses should appear. During interviews it got very clear that the difference in discourses are only noticeable between the two countries Belgium and the Netherlands. Difference between organisations in itself were not noticed, but a surprising similarity did. These differences and similarities will be further explained in this section.

4.4.1 Dutch-Belgium discourses

The interviewed actors describe cultural differences as a very important discourse. It is hard to measure what effect this discourse had on the Oost-West Poort project, but all the interviewed actors agree that it was something that had to be taken into account (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017; J. Semeijn, personal communication, June 5, 2017; J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017; H. Hanssens, personal communication, May 17, 2017). *“The actors were aware of cultural differences, especially the ones that were often internationally active. It is important to understand this so you will not get surprised by unexpected events”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). An example of a difference between Belgians and Dutch people is that the Dutch are often much more direct than Belgians. *“This is notable on various levels. When there is a meeting and a Belgian says ‘yes’ on an answer, it means that they understand it. While when a Dutch person says ‘yes’ it more often means that they are going to work on it”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). Because of this it is important that the appointments made between the actors are clear and that they create as little as possible space for misunderstanding. When these differences are unknown for actors, then there is a case of the previous called ‘soft barriers’. *“When we made appointments with each other we made sure to write it down on paper and let the actors signature it. We did this to be sure it would get done and the actors fully understand it, because everybody is dependent on each other”* (I. Vermeer, personal communication, May 23, 2017). Another cultural difference has to do with the different hierarchical levels of the countries. *“Belgians stick more to hierarchy, especially when something goes wrong. The Dutch are more loose in this aspect”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). Another difference between The Dutch and the Belgians is the language. *“It looks like culture and language are very much alike, but there are definitely differences, because of this it can lead to problems”* (H. Hanssens,

personal communication, May 17, 2017). People sometimes wrongly assume certain meanings of words, which are not always correct. *“The word ‘globaal’ means estimation or not very accurate in Dutch. In Belgian it means the opposite, namely very accurate”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). Small difference in speech or behavior can have a totally different interpretation in both regions. It is important that actors are aware of this. Hensgens added to this: *“In order to have a smooth cooperation we also enabled a consultancy agency which is active in the Netherlands and Belgium. This could help us to tackle some of the differences we should know about”* (J. Hensgens, personal communication, May 24, 2017). The Oost-West Poort is aimed at efficient collaborations in which communication with actors is key. The consultancy agency showed to be useful on this aspect.

The means for communicating are very clear. The actors primarily communicated because of the financial advantage it could give them, but the actors also see the environment as an important reason for the cooperation. Multiple studies have shown that more and more countries and organisations see this as an important aspect. Then they speak of an upcoming environmental discourse (Harré, Brockmeier & Mühlhäusler, 1999; Milton, 2013). This is something that was definitely present in the Oost-West Poort cooperation and is favorable for the shared vision.

Scientific paradigms was something that could not be found through research in the Oost-West Poort. The assumptions and interpretations based on scientific aspects of the cooperation were not different. As said before, this is something that also played a less important role in the cooperation. The scientific paradigms, how it is interpreted and what is seen as the truth was not an important part of the cooperation. The cooperation was much more based on the means for communicating and what the cooperation could reach with it. Scientific paradigms would only be a problem if ideas and visions about approaches and way of thinking would differ so much that it would reduce the level of cooperation within the project, this is something that was not the case.

To summarize the influence of regulations, the cultural discourse did definitely affect the cooperation. It had influence on the behavior of actors and therefore on the collaboration. Furthermore, also a clear environmental discourse could be discovered. This had a broadening effect on the shared vision, which benefits the cooperation. Differences in scientific paradigms could not be found and did not affect the Oost-West Poort.

Transportation hub stukje theory

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter will contain the most important parts of the analysis and connects this further with literature and theories. All sub-questions will be discussed before the main question will be answered. Additionally to the conclusion this chapter also contains the recommendation section. It will recommend what future research for cross-border cooperation on transportation hubs would be useful.

5.1 Actors

The Oost-West Poort is a relatively new project and falls in line with the new cross-border strategic alliances concept of the OECD. OECD (2001) states that advantages of these collaborations are the increase of international influence. Interviews showed that this is indeed a very important aspect for the collaboration, because actors wanted to increase the range and intensity of their market in an efficient way. The analysis shows that the cooperation in the Oost-West Poort is based on mutual benefits. To create an efficient cooperation all the involved actors should be determined that the cooperation will yield a sufficient amount of success. POM West-Flanders and Greenport Venlo were the main actors that guided the collaboration. This is in line with Perkmann (2003), who states that the main protagonists should always be public authorities and should be located in the realm of public agency. Furthermore, to increase belief and dedication towards the project were only actors with common goals and visions invited for collaboration. These common goals and visions are known in the literature as shared vision. It has been stated in previous literature that shared vision encompasses many aspects of a cooperative relationship. In this sense a shared vision should help simplify and improve the cooperation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Parsons, 2002). The Oost-West Poort involves actors with visions that are similar to each other. Firstly, the most important vision of the cooperation to achieve is an increase financial profit. This is something that is needed for the organisations to keep existing and growing. Secondly, POM West-Flanders, Greenport Venlo, Municipality Venlo, Frankort & Koning, Weyers and Franken Transport have all visions in which improvement of the environment plays an important role. These shared visions should be beneficial for the cooperation.

These similarities were not the only things both regions have in common. Regions on both sides of the border were heavily focusing on the same branches, namely logistics and agro-industry. These similarities made sure that both regions were interested in each other. It also means that these regions were trading in similar products. Agro-industry products must be transported quickly. To ship and fly those products to destinations would take too much time and would be too expensive. This in line with the literature, according to Qui (2001) are organisations more likely to collaborate when distribution costs are high, which is the case in

the Oost-West Poort. In the Oost-West Poort products were transported by road, this is exactly the kind of transportation in which both regions excel and find each other. The regions have different distribution markets and have complementary products in the same branch. Because of this the similarities did not cause competition between the regions. The Oost-West Poort attracted a partner which has already many actors attracted to it, namely REO auction. This simplified the process of finding enough organisations that were able to provide products. As a result of this enough products were available and could be transported without complicating the management of the Oost-West Poort a lot. Only REO auction was a partner while the other actors attached to the auction were suppliers and functioned as regular actors.

The Oost-West Poort shows that the established cooperation is heavily relying on collaboration. It is a cooperation in which efficient cooperation with each other should create improvement. This has been reached by finding a similar, but complementary branch, and by carefully choosing partners.

5.2 Rules

Borders in the Oost-West Poort discouraged collaboration in the past, this is in line with the literature. Rietveld (2012) states that most borders that exist are not physical barriers that are hard to cross, but still discourage spatial interaction. Barriers created through government regulations are imposed on organisations that do not know these rules or can not meet them (Nilsson, Eskilsson & Ek, 2010). When a rule is known and clear to organisations on the other side of the border it is called a formal rule (Skoog, 2005).

A formal rule that formed a barrier in the Oost-West Poort is the length of trucks. A problem was caused by different laws of Belgium and the Netherlands about the allowed length of trucks. The initial idea of the Oost-West Poort was to make use of extra long trucks, also known as LHV trucks. The advantage of this was that trucks could transport more products, which meant more efficiency. Road transportation is the main way of transportation for these regions, which makes this law a problem. Actors involved in the Oost-West Poort are operating on a local and regional scale. This means that the actors do not have the power to change these rules. Actors had to accept the way the rules are and had to use regular trucks.

Furthermore, interviews showed that differences in law made it possible to not pay exise duty in Belgium. This difference was not hindering the Oost-West Poort cooperation, but this did not mean that the law was no problem. Laws and change in laws discouraged the cooperation because it took a lot of time and effort to keep up with it. This was necessary because the Oost-West Poort wants to act according to the law.

These days there is one world market, but often countries, its businesses and people are very focused on the country they live in. Images are created through government, media and other people in the country (Anholt, 2007). Because of this people have less knowledge of other countries and are less likely to cooperate with them. Interviews showed that this is also the case in the Oost-West Poort. It was the first time for most organisations to be involved in a collaboration with organisations from a different country. This meant that their knowledge about the country was not at a sufficient level. Because of this actors were distanced from each other and less prepared to start collaborating intensively. Oost-West Poort solved this problem by organising meetings so actors would gain knowledge about each other. Slowly the collaboration got more intensively and actors got to know what to expect from each other.

5.3 Resources

Infrastructure is important for road transport, but it is very expensive and the demands are usually much larger than the available financial resources (Vleugel, 2006). This shows that the availability of financial resources are important. It also means that financial resources should be used in other ways than infrastructure in order to develop, because transportation hubs as Oost-West Poort with regional actors do not have the financial resources to create this infrastructure. There are several other ways to do this, namely, developing alternative modes of transport, improving the efficiency of supply chains and introducing new technologies (ITF, 2015). For the Oost-West Poort this meant a cross-border cooperation aimed at efficiency, because this is the only option they are capable of achieving which is in line with their shared vision.

According to the interviews are financial resources very important resources to possess in a cross-border cooperation, but they also showed that not all the involved actors in the Oost-West Poort had the same amount of financial resources. The Oost-West Poort could make use of the Interreg funding. Because of funding from organisations outside the cooperation itself less differences in financial resources became noticeable. The interreg funding also created confusion within the Oost-West Poort. It was unclear how much of the funding should go to each actor. This was eventually solved by creating a method that could determine the shares of each actor. This method would take all financial investments of actors into account to determine their share of the profit and the funding. Actors were not aware of power imbalances between them, this is something that I find this surprising. The reason for this is that possession of resources created prestige and power, because of this it seems logical that some actors had more to say than others. Besides my own opinion, this is also contradictory to the literature. According to literature are resources assets that can be

used to exercise power over others (Veenman, Liefferink & Arts, 2009). The reason that actors were not aware of power imbalances must have to do with the partial funding of Interreg, new method of profit calculations, and shared vision that made it useless to use power over others.

Next to financial resources, also knowledge resources were important in the Oost-West Poort. The Oost-West Poort is not a project where large investments for machines and material costed a lot. It was a project in which the people were used on a large scale and manpower was important. Knowledge was important for bringing businesses together and community creation. Oost-West Poort is aimed at efficiency, this meant that the deployment of people to reach efficient connections was important. The knowledge was fairly even distributed between the two transportation hubs. This was not the case for the different actors, but this was logical based on their field of work.

The resources authority and technology were not important in the Oost-West Poort. Authority was less important because even the public actors on regional level were not able to tackle problems that occurred on governmental level. Because of this no power difference was noticeable. Oost-West Poort is aimed at collaboration and efficiency in which technology played an unimportant role. According to interviews did the organisations already have the knowledge they need about their job related technology. There was not much what could be learned on this aspect to improve cross-border cooperation.

5.4 Discourses

During interviews it got very clear that the difference in discourses are only noticeable between Belgium and the Netherlands. There was no noticeable difference between organisations from the same transportation hub. Cultural differences expressed themselves through behavior and speech. Oost-West Poort tried to minimize these difference by making sure that actors were aware of them. Interviews showed that it is still difficult to always be aware of these differences. The Oost-West Poort enabled a consultancy agency which is operating in the Netherlands as well as Belgium. The consultancy agency could give advice to both regions and explain how to handle the differences.

The means for communicating in the Oost-West Poort were clear, namely financial improvements through efficiency. But additionally to this both regions also see environmental improvement as an important factor. This is a similarity between both countries that encouraged the actors in the Oost-West Poort to cooperate, this is in line with the literature. Studies more often experience an environmental discourse within projectc, which strengthen relationships (Harré, Brockmeier & Mühlhäusler, 1999; Milton, 2013). Scientific paradigms were not present in the Oost-West Poort. This is contradicting the

existing literature (Larrue, Hegger & Trémorin, 2013). Interviews showed that none of the actors noticed difference of assumptions and interpretations based on the scientific aspects of the cooperation.

5.5 Influence of differences and similarities in the Oost-West Poort

Now the sub-questions have been answered also the main question will be answered. The most important similarities and differences will be addressed once more. It will also be important to understand how they influenced the project. This will be done by addressing them in the context of the Oost-West Poort.

Interviews showed that the Oost-West Poort was benefited from the actors they could work with. The base for an efficient cooperation is laid when hubs and partners are chosen to collaborate with. Since transportation hubs are not bound to specific other hubs they are free to arrange these perfect fits. At the Oost-West Poort two transportation hubs were working together, which were very similar to each other. Both hubs were working in the same branch. This means that the hubs could learn from each other and products could be transported from one hub towards the other. Because of the agro-logistics branch the products that had to be transported were especially suited for road transport. Also the shared vision of the involved actors were similar, this means that the collaboration is on one line and actors strive for the same results. These similarities between both transportation hubs have greatly favored the collaboration in the Oost-West Poort. A surprising similarity in the shared vision that got discovered by interviews is the presence of an environmental discourse. Actors from both countries aimed to reduce emissions and support the environment. This once again adds up to similarities in the vision of both hubs, which is beneficial.

Another aspect that became clear out of the interviews is that competition between transportation hubs must be avoided. At first this seemed like a problem for the Oost-West Poort, because both transportation hubs are active in the same branches. Interviews showed that both hubs are far enough distanced from each other and are complementary enough that there would not be any competing. So, finding a similar, but complementary branch, and carefully choosing partners is key to have a good starting position for a cross-border cooperation based on roads.

During the cross-border cooperation differences in laws of both countries became clear. There were not many occasions in which these laws caused problems, but when this happened transportation hubs as the Oost-West Poort were not able to do anything about it. The reason for this is that regional public organisations involved in the cooperation do not have that much influence on national or international laws. This means that differences in laws have a big impact on the cooperation because they cannot be avoided by actors.

Furthermore, literature and interviews showed that images of each other are shaped in both countries. These images obstruct collaboration and create rules were actors automatically are attached to. Next to these images, also cultural differences were noticeable. These differences revealed themselves through behaviour and speech. The Oost-West Poort cooperation tried to diminish these images and cultural differences by enabling a consultancy agency and organising meetings to gain more knowledge about each other. By doing this the involved actors learned what to expect from each other and what not. These differences in informal rules were negative for the collaboration, but they can be overcome.

The financial and knowledge resources in the Oost-West Poort were fairly equally distributed between the transportation hubs, but it was not evenly divided between the actors. Interviews showed that this did not cause power differences because clear appointments had been made. A method to determine the distribution of funding and profits in combination with the shared vision created a situation in which all actors would be honestly treated. This shows that differences in resources do not necessarily lead to power differences, which is suggested by the literature.

Cross-border cooperation with transportation hubs create a situation in which actors are very dependent on each other. Oost-West Poort created trust by gaining more knowledge about each other and creating a fair financial distribution method, in which everybody would be similarly treated. Furthermore shared vision was used as a driving force to reach goals and bring actors together, because of this actors knew what to expect from each other. Usually similarities proved to be useful, such as similarities in the shared vision. But similarities are not always desirable, when transportation hubs in the Oost-West Poort would be too similar then competition would arise. Borders have created differences between transportation hubs. This study showed that it was succesful for the Oost-West Poort to reduce these differences and let transportation hubs become as similar as possible, without creating competition.

5.6 Recommendation

This section gives recommendations, which are based on the results of this research. During this study similarities and differences between transportation hubs in the Oost-West Poort were revealed. These similarities and differences which are shown are undeniable present in the Oost-West Poort, but the effects of them were hard to measure and in this study they are solely based on interviews. It was necessary to go in depth with a single instrumental case study to detect these similarities and differences. This means that this study was able to identify them, but the effects of all the similarities and differences are not very clear. It is clear

that the Oost-West Poort tried to minimize differences and increase the similarities in general. Because there are a lot of differences and similarities it is not clear what influence a specific similarity or difference has on the cross-border cooperation of transportation hubs. Future studies can try to receive more knowledge about these individual similarities and differences to expand the literature. With more knowledge about them separately transportations hubs should be able to work together more efficiently.

Furthermore, this study about the Oost-West Poort is based on a single casestudy. This means that there is now the opportunity to learn from the Oost-West Poort casestudy, but in order to gain more reliable and generalizable information more studies should be done. This means that more casestudies about cross-border cooperation of transportation hubs are needed in order to generalize results towards other cases.

6. Reflection

After doing this research I am aware of its weaknesses and strengths, this chapter will discuss them. Additionally to that will this chapter also discuss weaknesses and strengths of the research process itself.

6.1 Study

During this study my aim was to arrange more interviews than there eventually have been done. This is a weakness of this study, because a small amount of interviews is not good for the reliability. More interviews would increase the triangulation and make this study more reliable. During this study I tried to do more interviews, but I found out that it was hard to arrange them. This was especially the case for private organisations. The actors that eventually got interviewed could provide much information, but the amount of interviews was small. In order to use the received information as best as possible I decided to use them as quotes. By doing this the information is not changed by the interpretation of the researcher. The goal of the quotes was to make this study more trustworthy because the information came straight from the source.

Another weakness is that results of this study are based on one casestudy. Casestudies do not have a good external validity, which means it lacks generalizability. The positive side of this is that casestudies do have much in depth information and can provides new insights. Lessons can be learned from this, but in order for it to be very generalizable more casestudies should be done at other border areas.

6.2 Process

The process of creating this study did not go flawless. I had a slow start concerning this study, because I wanted to choose a topic which I would really like working on. Partly because of this it took me long to create a research proposal, therefore i had less time to work on the content of this study. It was the first time I made a study of this length, which caused me to make some estimation errors about the time consumption. Eventually this resulted in time shortage, but it could still be solved by working a lot on it.

Furthermore, this thesis had to be written in English. A lot of information about the Oost-West Poort case and the interviews are in Dutch, my native language is Dutch as well. The switch the English caused some difficulties, which slowed to process of this study. By doing this study I learned how to manage time better, this will be useful for future studies.

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Appendix

Interview guide:

I am Roel Jansen and a student at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. This interview is a part of my bachelor thesis of the study Geography, Planning and Environment. My thesis is about cross-border cooperation of transportation hubs. Oost-West Poort is a project that was active in the areas around Venlo and West-Flanders. Because of this I would like to ask you a few questions.

Do you mind if I record this conversation for personal usage?

General

- Could you shortly explain the activities of ... ?
- Could you explain what the role was of ... in the Oost-West Poort cooperation?
- How would you describe the Oost-West Poort cooperation?
- What is your personal motivation to work in this cooperation?

Actors

- Which public actors are locally, regionally, nationally and internationally involved in the Oost-West Poort?
- Which private actors are locally, regionally, nationally and internationally involved in the Oost-West Poort?
- How did knowledge institutes like universities help with the Oost-West Poort project?
- Who did you see as most the important actor to work with?
- Were there actors who clustered together and formed a group?
- To what extent is the Oost-West Poort a cross-border cooperation?

Regulations

- To what extent is the Oost-West Poort influenced by regional, national or international regulations?
- What differences in regulations between the Netherlands and Belgium got clear during the cooperation?
- Are there informal rules which affected the cooperation?
- Were there measures taken on regulations to advance the cooperation?

Resources

- What kind of resources were important in the Oost-West Poort?

- Did the possession of resources create a powerful position for these actors?
- To what extent did the Oost-West poort use local, regional, national and international resources?
- How were the resources divided within the Oost-West Poort?
- How was it determined which and when a resource would be used?

Discourses

- How got the collaboration between actors influenced by the difference of the background of the actors?
- Were there differences in behaviour and interaction between actors?
- Were there differences in values between actors?