



Regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement: A case study at
the Partnership Welsaam Wageningen

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Preface

Before you lies the thesis 'Regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement: A case study at the network organization Welsaam Wageningen'. This study is written as part of the Master Strategic Management at the Radboud University in Nijmegen.

From January to June 2022 I have been working hard to develop, conduct, and write this study. The subject of this study is in line with my personal interest in the social field. This interest stems from the many experiences both my parents gained during their careers and have passed on me. By conducting this research, I have gained a good insight into the complexity, but also the passion that lies in the social field. There are many hardworking people who love to do something meaningful for someone else. My personal interest in contributing to this has been aroused. Hopefully, I will become part of this community when starting my career.

In general, the research process went smoothly. The start of the process brought with it some uncertainties. It took some time to figure out the exact research concepts. After this start, I gained more confidence and started to really enjoy putting energy into the process. This allowed me to complete the work in time without too much stress.

However, I could not have provided all of this without the help of others. First, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Monic Lansu for the excellent support. She has been able to offer me the perfect balance between providing support where necessary, but also challenging me to come up with solutions to improve on my own. Her expertise, interest, and empathic manners made it a pleasant experience for me to conduct this research. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the respondents for their trust in me and their time to participate in this study. Next, there are some more people I would like to thank. My fellow students for the feedback and mental support. This motivated me to keep working hard. My dear friend Gera for all the special insights, I am jealous of your way of thinking and without you I would not have been able to hand in something that I am so proud of. Finally, I would like to thank all other family and friends who have supported me mentally and provided the necessary distraction over the past few months.

I really hope you enjoy reading.

Kind Regards,

Sofie Houba

Wageningen, June 12, 2022

Abstract

Nowadays, organizations often feel the need to connect through internorganizational networks. These networks are often complex, many sets of views and objectives need to be taken into account. More attention is paid to increasing stakeholder engagement in these networks. The aim of this research is to gain insight into the relationship between a regulatory fit/non-fit and the presence of stakeholder engagement. There is a lot of scientific literature on the concept of regulatory focus, but there is a lack of clear and delineated literature on the concept of stakeholder engagement. Therefore, the study has a qualitative and both inductive and deductive character. The study took place in a network organization, where eight persons from a total of five different stakeholder organizations, were interviewed. The main results show three different themes of stakeholder engagement and different ways in which a regulatory fit/non-fit influences this engagement. Both a regulatory fit and a non-fit can influence the engagement in different ways. Moreover, this study also reveals organizational characteristics that seem to influence these findings. This study provides starting points for further research on themes of stakeholder engagement and the potential role that a regulatory fit/non-fit can have in enhancing engagement.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	6
2. Theoretical Framework	10
2.1 Stakeholder theories	10
2.2 Regulatory focus and fit	13
2.3 Conceptual model	16
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Research approach	17
3.2 Case study.....	18
3.3 Method of data collection	18
3.4 Choice of respondents.....	19
3.5 Research ethics.....	20
3.6 Method of data analysis	21
3.7 Limitations	21
3.8 Validity and reliability.....	22
3.8.1 Internal validity.....	22
3.8.2 External validity	22
3.8.3 Reliability	22
3.9 Operationalization.....	23
4. Results	24
4.1 Case information	24
4.2 Regulatory focus Welsaam	25
4.3 Analysing the organizations	25
4.4 Stakeholder engagement themes	31
4.5 Comparing the organizations	32
5. Conclusion	33
6. Discussion	34
6.1 Theoretical reflection	34
6.2 Practical implications.....	36
6.3 Methodological reflection	37
References:.....	39
Appendix 1: Informed Consent	44
Appendix 2: Pre-formulated interview schedule	45
Appendix 3: Coding tree regulatory focus.....	46

1. Introduction

In 2019, over two million citizens appealed to one or more services in the social domain. The social domain refers to services that are provided under multiple laws, namely: social support (Wmo), Youth, and participation (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2021). The Wmo law, for instance, states that support must be available for citizens who are unable to take care of themselves. Possible services are: general supervision, daytime activities, supporting informal caregivers, and protected living. The overall goal of this law is to make citizens live in their familiar environment as long as possible (Rijksoverheid, 2022).

Local municipalities are legally responsible for the organization of the services of the social domain. One of the objectives of this local policy is to force cohesion between the local health care providers in each area (Stimulansz, 2021). As a result of this legislation and these requirements, this sector is one of many where organizations frequently connect through interorganizational networks. This type of network refers to a situation where several organizations unite and work together towards a common goal. In almost all cases, these networks consist entirely of non-profit organizations (Popp et al., 2014). All participants of such a network have their own set of views and objectives. To ensure a prosperous collaboration the views and objectives of the different network partners (stakeholders) need to be taken into account. When the stakeholders diverge too much, it can be challenging to reach an agreement or consensus. Situations like these form the inspiration for a large quantity of literature focused on stakeholder management (Ford et al., 2009). The focus of stakeholder management is that managers should drive processes accepted by all groups of stakeholders. The main goal of performing stakeholder management is to ensure the long-term survival of the organization (Freeman & McVea, 2001).

This research is focused on one of the widely studied concepts in the field of stakeholder management, namely stakeholder engagement. Kujala et al. (2022, p. 4) offer the following inclusive definition of stakeholder engagement: "Stakeholder engagement refers to the aims, activities, and impacts of stakeholder relations in a moral, strategic, and/or pragmatic manner ". The concept gained interest due to its premise of being of value for the understanding and explanation of the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders (Kujala et al., 2022). It is argued that establishing and developing strong relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders is an important aspect of value creation in companies. This is because it has an impact on the chances of organizations to be successful in what they do. For example, stakeholder engagement is generally linked to a positive development of entrepreneurship and it is also commonly recognized that

stakeholders can play an important role in innovation processes within organizations (Leonidou et al., 2020).

The wider literary interest in the concept of stakeholder engagement originated in the last decade. According to Leonidou et al. (2020), the studies done on the topic are complex and incoherent. A systematic review of the topic shows that very few studies have been conducted on stakeholder engagement related to NGOs (non-governmental organizations), business networks, and industry clusters (Leonidou et al., 2020). Therefore, it is very interesting to look especially at this side of society, and see whether the widely researched theory of regulatory fit has any influence on the presence of stakeholder engagement.

Literature suggests that stakeholder engagement can be enhanced when there is a regulatory fit. A regulatory fit occurs when there is a match between how a goal is pursued and the self-regulatory orientation of those involved in reaching this goal. Higgins (2000) states that several positive effects, like feeling more motivated, occur when a regulatory fit is experienced. This theory elaborates on a previous one presented by Higgins (1998) about this self-regulatory orientation, namely regulatory focus theory. This theory states that human beings have different manners to regulate pain and pleasure, namely promotion focus versus prevention focus. Briefly said a person's desired state of the outcome can be focused on either the absence of something negative or the presence of something positive. People or organizations don't exclusively have a promotion focus or a prevention focus. This may differ depending on the situation occurring (Higgins, 1998).

In this research, the theories stated above are examined in the partnership Welsaam. Welsaam is a network organization in the social domain of Wageningen that consists of almost thirty organizations (Welsaam, 2022a). They share the mission to create an inclusive city of Wageningen in which everyone feels welcome and problems get prevented as much as possible. They believe that real progress can be made when combining forces (Welsaam, 2022b).

The network of Welsaam has to deal with the input, interest, and authority of multiple stakeholders when making decisions. In order to shape the partnership of Welsaam for the next round of tenders at the end of 2022, engagement is needed from stakeholders with different interests. This makes it relevant to know what influences stakeholder engagement and how this can be enhanced. The regulatory fit theory suggests this can be achieved by having a fit. Consider, for example, that a common strategy of the network is to emphasize all the strengths of the decisions they would ideally make, in order to motivate partner organizations to follow their ideas and working habits. This approach focuses on the presence of something positive and will therefore result in regulatory fit with stakeholders possessing a promotion focus, whereas a non-fit will occur with stakeholders

possessing a prevention focus. The regulatory fit theory suggests that in this case, the stakeholders with a promotion focus are more likely to participate in the initiatives of Welsaam because of a feeling of rightness due to the presence of regulatory fit (Higgins, 2000; Gamache et al., 2015).

The objective of this research is:

To contribute to the scientific literature of stakeholder management by gaining insight into the relationship between regulatory fit and the stakeholder engagement.

To achieve this objective the following research question is formulated:

How does a regulatory fit between the communication of the network Welsaam and the stakeholders of Welsaam influence the stakeholder engagement?

The research question is subdivided into four questions:

1. What is the engagement of the stakeholders?
2. What is the regulatory focus of the communication of Welsaam?
3. What is the regulatory focus of the stakeholder?
4. When is there a regulatory fit between Welsaam and her stakeholders?

Theoretical- and societal relevance

The study is scientifically relevant because it addresses two gaps in the literature. As mentioned earlier, the focus on research on the topic of stakeholder engagement has only really started in the last decade. This study aims to add value to the knowledge in the least explored domains, namely, NGOs, business networks, and industry clusters. The partnership of Welsaam that is looked at in this research is in fact a network consisting of several NGOs, all of which are active in the domain of social care. Leonidou et al. (2020) show in their review of research on the concept that only 3 peer-reviewed articles have been published in the last 27 years. This study aims to provide a broad picture of the themes associated with stakeholder engagement in these specific domains.

Secondly, both the topics of regulatory fit and stakeholder management have been discussed in scientific literature to a certain extent. But the illustrated expected relationship between the presence of a regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement has not been studied in detail before. This study aims to scientifically prove the existence of this relationship and thereby provide a starting point for further research on these topics. Therefore all outcomes can have a possible value for any further research on this topic.

The societal relevance of this research is reflected in the possibility of contributing to the improvement of social care collaborations in the Netherlands. The information that comes to light in

this study about the existence of a regulatory fit or non-fit between Welsaam and its partner organization, and the influence this has on stakeholder engagement, can be used by Welsaam to draw up stakeholder management policies. By doing this, stakeholder engagement hopefully can be improved. Higher stakeholder engagement might lead to a more prosperous collaboration between the different care providers. This will trickle down and can benefit the work of the organizations, ultimately resulting in more people in society getting the care they need.

Outline research

The data collection will be conducted using a qualitative and both deductive and inductive methods. Much research has been done on the topic of regulatory focus, therefore this concept will be approached in a deductive way. As mentioned, the literature on stakeholder engagement is complex and incoherent, therefore an inductive approach is used. Data is obtained from interviews and internal and public documents. The next section will focus on the elaboration of the theoretical framework. The focus will be on presenting the origin and further development of the theories used. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the methodological choices. Next, the performed analysis of the data is explained. The last part consists of the conclusion and discussion. The research question is answered on the basis of the four sub-questions. The discussion will consist of theoretical and practical implications, and the methodological reflection.

2. Theoretical Framework

The first part of this theoretical framework focuses on the existing literature on the topic of stakeholder theory. The relevance of stakeholder theory has been widely recognized in the literature. The focus will be on indicating the relevance and defined methods for measuring stakeholder engagement. The second part provides a brief oversight on the topics of regulatory fit and focus. Here, part of the focus is on studies that seem to have value for the processes in organizations. Furthermore, the theory-driven expected relationship between the central concepts will be explained. The last part illustrates the conceptual model of this expected relationship.

2.1 Stakeholder theories

The Stanford Research Institute (SRI) is the pioneer in research on the concept of stakeholders. In 1960 the SRI (quoted in Freeman, 1984) first revealed the need for organizations to take the concerns of all stakeholder groups seriously. But in the twenty years after publication, this approach of the SRI only had a slight impact on the further formation of management theories.

Around the 1980s more and more managers expressed their concerns about the turbulent changing environments of their organizations. Strategic theories used during this time were not consistent enough to deal with this new kind of issue. Most traditional approaches furthermore don't include the concerns of all stakeholder groups. An important moment in the further development of stakeholder management theories is Freeman's publication in 1984. The goal of Freeman's theory was to look beyond an organization's economic roots. Therefore he defined stakeholders the following way: "any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives" (p. 5). The central idea of Freeman's approach of stakeholder management lies in the need for managers to control processes accepted by all groups of stakeholders. The opinion of uninvolved parties is irrelevant for organizations. This must lead to the achievement of long-term success for the organization. In his stakeholder approach, Freeman (1984) described seven characteristics that stakeholder management should either implement or be aware of. According to Freeman, stakeholder management is a strategic procedure in which the organization actively needs to look for a new direction. With a focus on how the organization can influence the environment as well as how the environment influences the organization. A strategic framework needs to be developed that is able to adapt to a turbulent changing environment without constant exertion of managers. There is a crucial role in the execution of value-based management. Stakeholder groups are only able to work well together, in the long term, when their core values reasonably correspond. An integral approach is needed in stakeholder management. The aim needs to be to satisfy all

stakeholders at the same time. In many cases, stakeholders will not share the same opinion. Therefore a part of the focus must be on a fair distribution of the harm stakeholders have to deal with in order to realize long-term organizational support.

The line of thought of Freeman's (1984) management theory forms the basis of many studies on the concept of stakeholder engagement. The concept gained its interest because of the premise that it would be of value in understanding and explaining the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. Several advantages of the presence of stakeholder engagement are mentioned in the literature. It can be concluded that stakeholder engagement is related to higher feelings of trust (Davila et al., 2018), feelings of shared responsibilities (Schmitt, 2010), and improvement of efficiency (Chen & Liu, 2020). Despite these findings and the widespread interest in the concept of stakeholder engagement, the literature on the topic is fragmented and difficult (to understand) due to the many approaches to stakeholder engagement (Kujala et al., 2022). Some studies use the concept as a means of putting Freeman's (1984) theories into practice (Greenwood, 2007). These approaches resulted in the further theoretical elaboration of stakeholder engagement (Gupta et al., 2020). Others focused on clarifying the differences between stakeholder engagement and a concept like stakeholder management (Pedrini & Ferri, 2019). To help create clear overview of stakeholder engagement, Kujala et al. (2022, p. 4) came up with an inclusive definition: "Stakeholder engagement refers to the aims, activities, and impacts of stakeholder relations in a moral, strategic, and/or pragmatic manner".

The presence of stakeholder engagement, as stated, provides benefits for organizations. But the process of reaching this engagement can be really complex. Studies point out a gap between, what the organization sees as the interest of their stakeholder and what stakeholders themselves believe is their interest (De Gooyert et al., 2017). This misjudgement of interest can result in stakeholders becoming resistant to the implementation of organizational decisions. This can cause delays and even total exclusions of planned events in organizations. Various models and figures on the topic of stakeholder engagement have been designed to help organizations get a better understanding of the current levels of engagement of their stakeholders. From these different theories, it becomes clear that the concept can be approached in different ways. The theory of Pedersen (2006) contains five dimensions in order to distinguish the general level of stakeholder in an organization. According to this theory, the general level of stakeholder engagement increases when all stakeholders are included in the dialogues, problems and issues can be discussed, and there is full access to the process information. By measuring these dimensions, organizations can gain insight into the general level of engagement. But this theory does not provide in identifying the engagement level of each

stakeholder individually. The typology designed by Green and Hunton-Clarke (2003) does distinguish between individual levels of stakeholder engagement. They identify different engagement levels by examining to what extent stakeholders are having an informative, consulting, or decisional role. The level of engagement increases as stakeholders are allowed to be more involved in the process of decision-making. A recently developed typology of stakeholder engagement can be used by organizations to identify the engagement level of their stakeholders, but it also provides strategic options organizations can apply to reach a certain engagement level (Stocker et al., 2020). At the lowest engagement level (one), it's mostly about sharing information. One strategy for doing this could be sharing information through a newsletter. Engagement level two is reached when there is a response from stakeholders. One strategy to achieve this could be the use of surveys. At engagement level three, the focus is on creating collaboration. One strategy to achieve this could be the establishment of shared working groups including stakeholders (Stocker et al., 2020).

Engagement studies related to the specific focus areas of this research (NGOs, industry clusters, and business networks) are scarce (Leonideo et al., 2016). However, the few studies conducted in these areas show that stakeholder engagement can lead to positive outcomes. Overall, it is concluded that engagement leads to better communication flows so that more knowledge is shared between stakeholders. This results in rapid innovation of small companies (Carlisle et al., 2013; Goerzen, 2018) and the initiation of institutional changes (Ritchie, 2016). It is mentioned that these findings are based on a few studies and that multiple industries must be approached for verification. It is also noted that the results can be influenced by fragile and complex industrial contexts.

To understand how organizations feel about being part of these complex industries, the PMBOK guide by PMI (2017) provides a method. As shown in the previous examples of typologies, in many theories the level of stakeholder engagement is determined by studying the access to information and the decision-making process. In the PMBOK Guide (PMI, 2017) the emphasis is not on which tasks stakeholders are allowed to perform, but on how stakeholders feel about processes taking place in the organizations. The goal of mapping these levels is to gain organizational insight into the gap between the current and desired stakeholder engagement. According to PMI (2017), it can be beneficial for an organization to incorporate the gained knowledge on the current levels of stakeholder engagement in their strategy. Five different levels of stakeholder engagement, regarding the performance of organizational projects, are discussed. Engagement levels four and five, supportive and leading, are mostly required by organizations. Part of the conditions for achieving these engagement levels is that the stakeholders are satisfied with the work process delivered and the end result achieved (PMI, 2017).

2.2 Regulatory focus and fit

Around 25 years ago Higgins introduced the world to his regulatory focus theory. The inspiration for Higgins to develop this theory can be found in the psychological hedonic principle of human motivation. Out of the models of the hedonic principle can be concluded that human nature motivates people to avoid pain and approach pleasure. Higgins (1998) described the hedonic principle as a very basic and at the same time really important concept. It is considered important because, with the view of his principle, almost any part of motivation can be discussed. This realization made Higgins (1998) suggest that the principle might also prove its value in alternative situations, like the understanding of human strategic behavior. This line of thought resulted in the development of Higgins's (1998) regulatory focus theory. The regulatory focus theory states that human beings have different ways to regulate both pain and pleasure, namely promotion focus versus prevention focus. The presence of these different types of focus influences a person's needs, goals, feelings, and strategies.

Promotion focus can be associated with the need for growth and accomplishment. This sort of focus makes a person's desired state of outcome focus on the presence of something positive and includes goals that refer to hopes and inspirations (Higgins, 1998). There are several studies addressing these assumptions. It is concluded that people with a promotion focus are generally open to changes and consider the positive sides of alternatives when making choices (Cornwell & Higgins, 2013; Scholer et al., 2014). The type of feelings people experience is influenced by regulatory focus in case of failing or succeeding in attaining a goal. Succeeding in attaining a goal makes people who are orientated toward promotion feel more cheerful, while failing a goal makes people with this type of focus feel more dejected (Roney et al., 1995). Individuals with a promotion focus often dare to dream big and pursue their ideals in life. Therefore strategies used by this focus include constant developments. Just maintaining a satisfying situation is not enough in the system of promotion focus (Scholer et al., 2019).

Prevention focus, on the other hand, can be associated with the need for safety and responsibility. A prevention focus makes the desired state of outcome focus on the absence of something negative and includes goals that refer to duties, necessities, and obligations (Higgins, 1998). These assumptions are coming forward in several studies. It is concluded that people with a prevention focus are spending more time considering the doomsday scenarios, carefully considering alternatives, and taking into account the general norm when making choices (Lieberman et al., 2001; Scholer et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2013). People with a prevention focus can experience the following

emotions in case of failing or succeeding in attaining a goal. Succeeding makes people who are orientated towards prevention feel more quiescent, while failing a goal makes people with this type of focus feel more agitated (Roney et al., 1995). Strategies used are focussing on 'not losing' the reached satisfying situation, with no constant tendency for improvements (Scholer et al., 2019).

In addition, the regulatory focus is assumed to be a (chronic) trait as well as a (situational) state. The appearance of a regulatory focus can differ depending on the situation at hand, such as changes in personal or environmental level (Higgins, 1998; Higgins & Penilli, 2020). This feature of regulatory focus provided an interesting base for further research. Both ways of approaching the concept have been extensively researched (Higgins & Penilli, 2020). In a study by Florack & Hartmann (2007) participants were divided into groups based on their type of focus. They had to work together to decide on making different investments. The study found that, when the groups face a three-minute time restraint, the regulatory focus had no impact on the decisions made. But during the round without a time constraint, the groups with a prevention focus opted for a safer investment. Thus, this study shows that a person's regulatory focus can be a situational state (Florack & Hartmann, 2007).

Higgins extended his work on regulatory focus by introducing the concept of regulatory fit. A regulatory fit occurs when there is a match between how a goal is pursued and the self-regulatory orientation of those involved in reaching this goal (Higgins, 2000, 2005). For instance, consider a project in an organization with employees with a prevention focus. In this situation, a regulatory fit occurs when the goal of the project is pursued by focusing on exactly meeting the prescribed requirements (Higgins, 2000, 2005). This is because a focus on meeting the requirements fits with the need for safety and responsibility of a prevention focus. People tend towards goals that make them experience a fit. A regulatory fit increases the engagement towards what someone is doing, which increases the value people assign to activities (Higgins 2005, 2006; Avnet & Higgins, 2006). A regulatory fit makes people feel good about what they are doing and this in turn has broad influences on how people assess situations and make choices (Higgins, 2005). A regulatory fit ensures that people are more motivated, feel more alert when making decisions (Higgins, 2000), and evaluate past choices more positively (Higgins, 2006).

The early phases of research on regulatory fit were orientated towards the individual. But during the years this focus slowly moved towards the group and collective levels. Because of this movement, the value of regulatory fit in organizations became more clear. Higgins and Pinelli (2020) give a clear oversight of the most interesting research on the topic for organizations. They make the following distinction of three domains of research: decision making, messaging, and management. Important research in the domain of decision-making belongs to Levine et al. (2016). They focused on

brainstorming techniques used in organizations. Employees were divided into brainstorm groups that had to use different brainstorming techniques. Employees allocated to a brainstorm group where the instructions matched their orientation, felt earlier satisfied. Research on the domain of messaging confirms that the appearance of a regulatory fit positively influences a message's persuasiveness, as well as a person's intention to apply the information given (Cesario et al., 2004). A well-researched topic in the domain of management is the relationship between the team structure, functional or division, and the emergence of regulatory fit (Dimotakis et al., 2012). Organizations that have a divisional structure (by service or geographical market) must be able to act quickly. Therefore, this structure fits with having a promotion focus. Organizations that have a functional structure (by expertise or specialized resources) have to maintain a high level of quality. Therefore, this structure fits with having a prevention focus. A regulatory fit was found to be one of the reasons performances improved (Dimotakis et al., 2012). These findings are all relevant because they all suggest that the presence of a regulatory fit can have positive effects within organizations.

Thus, research shows that a regulatory fit can cause positive effects in organizations. But not only regulatory fit specifically has been studied. Many researchers have tried to understand the concept of 'fit' in organizations in general. In the following studies, the concept of fit is approached in many different ways. Kristof-Brown and Guay (2011) describe that fit occurs when one party meets the needs of another party. Gulati and Sytch (2007) use a different approach, by describing fit in terms of the same need for R&D and/or production resources. Regardless of how the concept of fit is described, it is generally accepted that the presence of a fit in organizations can be associated with behavior that benefits both parties in a relationship (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This conclusion supports the expected relationship between regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement, whereby the presence of a regulatory fit benefits (the presence of) stakeholder engagement.

2.3 Conceptual model

The conceptual model is constructed based on the expected relationship of the central concepts. The model shows the expectation that a regulatory fit between Welsaam and her partner organizations has an influence on the appearance of stakeholder engagement. Based on literature mentioned above, it is concluded that the presence of a fit will provide benefits. Therefore, it is expected that the presence of regulatory fit will result in an increase in the stakeholder engagement. The operationalization of these concepts will be discussed in the next chapter.

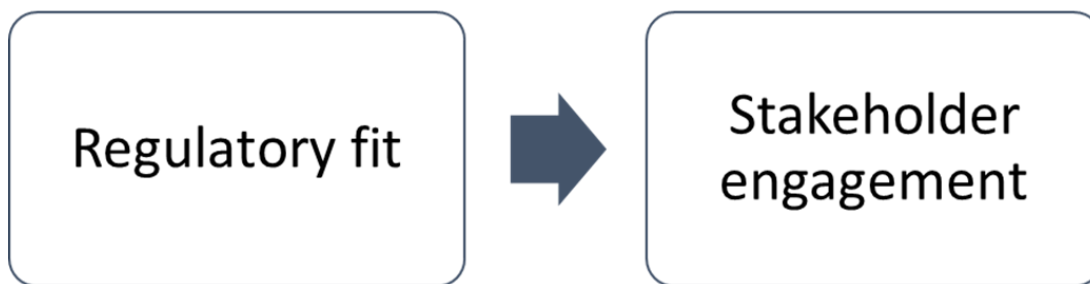


Figure 1: Conceptual model concerning the relationship of regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

The relationship between the concepts of regulatory fit and stakeholder engagement was studied by using a qualitative research design. This method is applied by examining the previously mentioned partnership of Welsaam. There are various specific characteristics of qualitative research that are fitting for this study.

First, qualitative research refers to all types of studies with the objective to collect and interpret linguistic material (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 12). The method is designed to understand the cultural and social context of people's lives, and therefore allows researchers to understand why certain decisions and actions take place (Myers, 2020, p. 5). Qualitative methods enable the researcher to gain deeper insights into an organization. The in-depth information that can be gathered using this method makes it likely that conclusions can be drawn on the relationship between the central concepts in this research (Myers, 2020, p. 6). There is no emphasis on potential values researchers assign to a situation, therefore no statements can be made on strength of the relationship between the concepts that might be found (Yin, 2015, p. 9). Second, qualitative research fits well with a deductive approach. With a deductive approach, a general theory is applied to a specific situation through empirical scientific research (Vennix, 2016). The deductive method is often used when an assumption of the relationship of the central concepts can be formulated (Yin, 2015, p. 131). This method fits with this research, because of the wide range of scientific literature available on the central concept of regulatory focus. The deductive approach is very useful in the process of coding. The schema of coding of regulatory focus was constructed by using the definitions of the central concept, grounded in the scientific literature (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 102). Third, qualitative research also fits well with an inductive approach. An inductive approach is more open and exploratory, with the main goal of theory building. The researcher starts with the collection of data and during the analysis, hopefully, some pattern and theme's emerge (Myers, 2020, p. 26). This method fits with this research, because of the little scientific data available on stakeholder engagement in network organizations. Due to the limited amount of information available on the topic, the data was approached with an open mind to discover relevant information. Lastly, qualitative research is characterized by the use of different sources of information, well known as triangulation (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 110). The applied methods of triangulation, will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In addition, this research is characterized by a positivistic philosophical perspective. Myers (2020, p. 43) states that researchers with this perspective assume the following: "Reality is objectively given

and can be described by measurable properties, which are independent of the researcher".

Positivist studies strive to test assumptions to increase the understanding of a phenomenon. This perspective fits within this research because of the previously formulated expected relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Myers, 2020, p. 43).

3.2 Case study

In this study, one of the twelve widely acknowledged specific methods of qualitative research was applied, namely a case study. Characteristic of a case study is that the participants can express themselves without being inhibited by the limitations of a designed setting. The social phenomenon was examined in its natural environment (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 47). The focus does not need to be on an organization's internal process. As is done in this study, it is also allowed for a case study to focus on the cooperation 'between' organizations (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 46). A single case study was conducted, which means that the specific characteristics of one network organization were centralized (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 46). Therefore, the relationship between the central actor Welsaam and the stakeholders of Welsaam was examined. The relationship between the other stakeholders has not been examined. Another characteristic of a case study is the focus on the participant's experiences during a period of time (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 46.) The partnership of Welsaam originated in 2017 and the participant's experiences throughout the entire lifespan of this partnership were considered relevant to discuss.

3.3 Method of data collection

The main source of data collection was conducting interviews with employees of the stakeholder of Welsaam. Interviews conducted in qualitative research are referred to as 'open interviews' because no pre-structured answering categories are used (Boeije, 2005).

Participants were free in formulating their answers and therefore a wide range of information was collected. Unexpected, yet interesting views were discovered. A lot of information was collected, but the challenge lay in gathering the information needed to answer the research question. In order to reduce the risk of not receiving the necessary information, a semi-structured interview method was used (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 74). With a semi-structured method, the researcher makes use of some pre-formulated questions. This assured that certain topics were discussed. However, the researcher was free to improvise and ask any questions which emerged during the conversation. In this study, the pre-formulated questions weren't asked in a structured order (Myers, 2020, p. 149).

Besides interviews, data was obtained by studying documents. Documents are highly valuable data sources because they provide evidence of what has been said or been decided (Myers, 2020, p. 187). At first, the focus was on collecting an organization's publicly available documents, like brochures and annual reports (Myers, 2020, p. 189). These documents provided information about the working methods and mission and vision of organizations, and therefore were useful in determining the type of regulatory focus of an organization. In addition, with permission of the organization, relevant information was collected from private forms of documentation, like emails, post conversations, and notes from meetings (Myers, 2020, p. 189). These documents provided more specific information on the point of view of the organizations, and therefore were useful in collecting information on the topic of stakeholder engagement. So, studying documents did provide information on the specific research concepts, but they were also of value in gathering general information on the organizations, like the scale, working habits, and professionalism. Both conducting interviews and collecting documents are suitable methods to obtain information on the shared meaning employees of organizations allocate to a social phenomenon (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 73).

3.4 Choice of respondents

In this study, eight participants were interviewed. One person works as a supportive facilitator of Welsaam and 7 persons work at one of the partner organizations. Of the two largest organizations taking part in this study, two persons were interviewed. The other three participating organizations are smaller in size and therefore only one person per organization was interviewed. Thus, in total five organizations that are part of Welsaam were involved in this study. The decision which organizations of Welsaam to include in this study has been made in consultation with the contact person for this study, who works at one of the participating organizations. To obtain a lot of relevant information, most interviews were held with people who work at the larger organizations that are part of Welsaam. The aim was to interview people in management positions. However, it proved to be difficult to find people willing to participate so any willing participant was greatly appreciated. Thus, the most important criterion in finding participants was their availability. As a result, not all participants have the ideal job position, but fortunately at least one person in a managerial position in each participating organization was interviewed. Participants will be indicated as interviewee 1 to 8, in order to guarantee absolute anonymity.

Interviewee	Organization
1	A
2	A
3	B
4	Welsaam
5	C
6	D
7	D
8	E

3.5 Research ethics

In this study, the APA ethical codes were followed in terms of contact with the respondents and processing the obtained information. All participants in the study have given informed consent for their participation in this study by signing the form added in Appendix 1. When being asked to participate, respondents first have been provided with all possible information concerning this study. Concretely, this means that the goal of the study, the expected duration, the format of the interview, and who gets to see the end results have been made clear. Furthermore, it has been made clear that the anonymity of the respondents will be guaranteed at all times. Personal information is not included in the study, and any statements that could lead to the identification of a respondent are excluded from the interview transcript. Providing this information enabled persons to be aware of possible risks and advantages of participating in the study, and thereby leading to well-considered choices to participate (Smith, 2003).

The interviews were conducted at a location chosen by the respondent with the aim to create a feeling of safety. Right before the start of the interview, all respondents were once more reminded of their rights and freedom to withdraw their participation at any time. All respondents were given the contact information of the researcher, in case they wish to withdraw themselves from the study or have any questions (Smith, 2003).

All obtained data is handled with care and documents are stored in a secure environment (Smith, 2003). Attention was also paid to the access the researcher has received from the network organization to the online work environment (Smith, 2003). No information or documents obtained from this online work environment has been provided to people who are not entitled to it.

3.6 Method of data analysis

All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The recorded information obtained from interviews was transcribed making it suitable for analysis (Vennix, 2016). The transcripts of the interviews and relevant information found in documents were analyzed in both a deductive and an inductive way. The information on regulatory focus was labeled based on the coding trees derived from the theory on the central concept (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 106). The information on stakeholder engagement was first labeled based on the identified patterns, after which overarching theme's emerged (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 105). The process of coding had to ensure that all relevant information emerged. The information has been repeatedly analyzed in order to get a good overview. All coded information of one dimension or theme was compared and adjusted in case something was unclear (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 106).

By analysing both interviews and documentation triangulation was applied. Triangulation refers to systematically comparing the results obtained from various data sources. Information obtained by interviews can be influenced by respondent's distorted memories. By comparing this data to the documents, the quality of the analysis will increase (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 110). Based on all the data, a well-founded answer to the research question has been formulated (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 113).

3.7 Limitations

This study has its limitations, like any other. One of the limitations is that it can be difficult to get access to companies and respondents who can provide the necessary information for this study. For instance, some participants don't have a position in management, and are therefore unable to provide all relevant information. In addition, this study was conducted by a relatively inexperienced researcher. With little experience, it can be difficult to distinguish between relevant and non-relevant data. Too much information might be considered relevant, which can harm the analyzing process. Furthermore, conducting a case study is time-consuming and the available time is often limited. Full dedication and enthusiasm of the researcher is needed to make it a successful process (Myers, 2020, p. 99).

3.8 Validity and reliability

In studies with a positivistic perspective, the quality is discussed by looking at the validity and reliability (Myers, 2020, p. 94).

3.8.1 Internal validity

Internal validity checks whether a study measures what is intended to be measured (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 120). In this study, the use of pre-structured interview questions has a positive effect on the internal validity. Respondents could speak freely making it possible for relevant information to come up. But this also has some drawbacks. In case a respondent is not very talkative, answers can be short and the gathered information limited (Myers, 2020, p. 149). In order to prevent this, the researcher needs to be sharp and proactive by asking more questions when necessary. Furthermore, the respondents were not made aware of the answers of other respondents, so they couldn't be influenced by the opinions of each other. Lastly, the previously described presence of triangulation has a positive influence on the internal validity because results can be compared systematically (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 109).

3.8.2 External validity

External validity implies that the findings of a study must be applicable to a larger population (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 120). Due to the specific location of data collection and the small sample size, applying the findings of this case study to a large population is impossible. However, it is possible to apply the findings of this single case to theory. Patterns found in this study can validate and/or confirm existing theories (Myers, 2020, p. 10).

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability implies that the process of data collection must be verifiable. Other researchers need to be able to repeat the study process (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 120). In this study, this criterion is taken into account by a detailed explanation of the methodology. Furthermore, the theories used for the operationalization of the central concept are acknowledged and described in the theoretical framework. The scheme of pre-structured interview questions is added in the appendix (2) and the transcripts of the interviews can be obtained by the author of this study.

3.9 Operationalization

The concept of stakeholder engagement has been approached inductively and therefore no specific dimensions have been established to analyze the concept (Bleijenbergh, 2015, p. 52). As indicated earlier, the aim of an inductive approach is to develop theory. Little is known about how stakeholder engagement manifests itself in network organizations. Therefore, the belief was that approaching the concept with an open mind would yield the most useful information. However, the literature described in the theoretical framework did provide some guidance on possible areas of interest when preparing the interview questions. Some of the typologies related to stakeholder engagement mentioned in the theoretical framework focus on the tasks that stakeholders are allowed to perform. For example, the amount of information stakeholders have at their disposal and what role they play in the partner organization (Green & Hunton-Clarke., 2003; Pedersen., 2006). But the theory described by PMI (2017) is focused more on how stakeholders think about events that take place in the organization. Both of these overarching approaches to the concepts have been attempted to be reflected in the formulation of the interview questions. For example, interviewees were not just asked about the factual role that their organization has within Welsaam, but also whether or not they are satisfied with this role and why. Apart from this broad approach, no further dimensions have been identified on which the questions should focus specifically. The reason for this is that the open approach would otherwise be hindered too much.

The concept of regulatory focus has been approached deductively. Based on the insights of Higgins (1998), the independent variable regulatory focus is divided in prevention and promotion focus. Both types of focus are in turn divided in four dimensions, namely: needs, goals, strategies, and feelings. The insights of multiple theories, described in the theoretical framework, are used to unravel these dimensions in indicators. The indicators of 'needs' and 'goals' are composed by the insights of Higgins (1998), the indicator 'strategies' by insight of Scholer et al. (2014), and the indicator 'feelings' by use of the insights from Roney et al. (1995). Based on these indicators, interview questions were formulated. The coding tree of regulatory focus can be found in Appendix 3.

4. Results

This chapter consists of different parts. First, general information is given about the partnership Welsaam. This information is essential for understanding the individual analysis of each organization. Secondly, all relevant information regarding Welsaam's characteristics of regulatory focus is reported. This is followed by the key findings of each organization regarding the concepts of regulatory focus and stakeholder engagement. Next, an analysis of the common themes related to stakeholder engagement follows. The last part consists of a comparison of the results between the organizations of Welsaam, regarding both the concepts of regulatory focus and stakeholder engagement.

4.1 Case information

Several characteristics of the network organization Welsaam, which seem relevant to be aware of, came forward during the analysis. The organizations that are part of Welsaam are more or less forced to be part of the network. If not, the organization cannot receive subsidy from decentralization act. However, the organizations that have become a partner of Welsaam, vary widely in level of scale, size, financial dependence, professionalization, and contribution to the various themes. This variety is also visible among the participating organizations in this study. Some organizations have headquarters and branches throughout the Netherlands, but there are also organizations that only work within Wageningen. In addition, the number of paid employees varies from a few to over a thousand. Characteristic of Welsaam is the fact that no organization has more decision-making powers than others. All agreements must be made on the basis of consensus, which means there should be no objections. An independent specialist has been appointed to guide the tender process as smoothly as possible. The various compositions of organizations seem to influence the information obtained per organization regarding the stakeholder engagement of Welsaam, and the possible influence of a regulatory fit/non-fit on this engagement. The relatively larger organizations have significantly more knowledge and clearer opinions about the state of affairs within Welsaam.

4.2 Regulatory focus Welsaam

In the internal documents, various aspects are mentioned that indicate goals that fit with a prevention focus. When making choices, Welsaam needs to take into account several duties, necessities, and obligations. The partnership of Welsaam is established at the insistence of the municipality of Wageningen. Welsaam is determined to win the next round of tenders. Therefore, they must at least meet the tender criteria drawn up by the municipality. Welsaam does not have the authority to draw up these criteria themselves. The tender criteria clearly state that if Welsaam does not meet the requirements, they will be excluded from further assessment. But if the tender is appointed to Welsaam, they are responsible for providing the services, which are already defined in the criteria, as mentioned. This fits with the need for responsibility as part of a prevention focus.

The strategy of Welsaam is primarily aimed at prevention by preserving the current situation and thereby again winning the tender in Wageningen. In her working method 'Together Wageningen', Welsaam describes her aim as 'concluding a new agreement with the municipalities for the implementation of social care in Wageningen'. It is striking that within these criteria, some room is left for the development of new and innovative ideas, which fits with the Needs part of a promotion focus.

The influence the municipality has on Welsaam is often mentioned in organization's internal documents and the interviews. Therefore, it can be said that the regulatory focus of Welsaam is determined by the municipality of Wageningen. After all, they are the ones who determine the criteria the partnership must meet. This is important to be aware of when analyzing the regulatory focus of Welsaam.

4.3 Analysing the organizations

Organization A

Within Welsaam, organization A is a large and professional organization, that takes part in all themes of actions. Of all partners of Welsaam, there is no organization as involved in the partnership as organization A. Many employees of this organization have an active and informative role within Welsaam. This allows them to share a lot of information and an extensive opinion on the partnership. The organization is locally active and provides care in many areas of the social domain.

Many characteristics of organization A indicate the appearance of a promotion focus. The organization offers many services to help people develop in different areas of life.

"We want to ensure that all people can participate, develop their talents, and commit themselves to another person" (Interviewee 1).

They want to continuously adjust the services they offer to the needs of society. The organization aims to create opportunities, utilize strengths, and stimulate initiative and mutual involvement.

The utility of Welsaam's existence is not questioned by the organization. It provides a broad network of resources within Wageningen to set up initiatives quickly in crisis situations. Within the organization, there is a conviction that it is essential for healthcare organizations to work together in current times of legislation and a rapidly changing society. But being part of Welsaam sometimes creates difficult situations. The organization states that being part of Welsaam results in not being able to grow. For example, when Welsaam makes a cutback, all partner organizations must surrender the same percentages, even though the absolute amounts differ enormously. For organization A, these cuts will have a much larger impact than for most organizations of Welsaam.

"We agreed on a cutback of 3,5% for all parties involved to enable us to innovate. But 3,5% for a small organization is only a small [absolute] amount, while 3,5% means a cutback of 1,5 tonnes for us" (Interviewee 2).

When looking at the individual organization A, characteristics of promotion focus appear. But as soon as the organization talks about the decisions and substantive choices of Welsaam, characteristics of a prevention focus appear. An explanation for this may be that the organization is one of the few that is financially very dependent on what happens to Welsaam. The organization feels the need to transfer the importance of meeting the criteria and winning the tender to the smaller and less dependent organizations within Welsaam.

Within organization A there seem to be characteristics of conflicting regulatory focuses. On the one hand, they are annoyed by the limits set for Welsaam and the need to always count everyone's opinion equally. It can be concluded from this that the organization experiences the prevention focus characteristics of Welsaam as unpleasant. On the other hand, the main objective for them is to win the new tender and they feel let down when other organizations are not trying hard enough to meet the set criteria.

It, therefore, seems as if the organization has a different focus internally than when they are part of the partnership Welsaam.

Organization B

Organization B has dozens of small branches throughout the Netherlands. The organization has a clear group of people, regarding medical diagnosis, for whom they want to be of value in life. The local branches themselves have a lot of freedom to arrange their way of financing. Within Wageningen, the organization attaches great value to this level of independence.

Many characteristics of organization B indicate the presence of a promotion focus. They invest a lot of energy in teaching their clients new skills so they feel part of society again. In addition, they have great ambitions not only to help the group with a medical condition, but also to inspire society to deal differently with the problems these people encounter.

“We have a task, a duty, as social care sector. Not just by preaching what needs to be done and helping the people that need care. But also by helping the rest of society understand what these people are going through and how they live their life” (Interviewee 3).

There are also some characteristics of the organization that indicate a prevention focus. The organization is aware that in order to survive, they need to remain economically healthy, and therefore must meet certain numerical targets. For example, a lot of attention is paid to meeting the requirements with regard to the number of people they must be able to reach and help in a certain period of time.

The partnership of Welsaam is very important to them, because they do not see themselves adding much value to the social domain within Wageningen without partner organizations. This statement is reinforced by the fact that the organization is not financially depending on Welsaam, so participating is a conscious and voluntary choice. Being part of Welsaam provides connections and certainties, both financially and socially, so that the organization can contribute to the way they wish. They want to stay informed and be part of the discussion about everything that is happening in the social domain.

“Every form of cooperation is of added value in bringing together both necessary and desired change, well-being and care, instead of treating it separately. This way you can see what is needed for the situation when asked” (Interviewee 3).

According to the organization, the fact that the cooperation of Welsaam is controlled by the municipality is not a problem and even understandable within the current legislation. They do not experience any negatives about the limits set for Welsaam. Making the process of negotiation smoother and more fun is the challenge the organization has set for itself, because working together with so many different partners can be very tiring.

When looking at the executive side of the organization, there seem to be mainly promotion characteristics; no frameworks or duties, and the ambition to help society develop. But when it comes to the administrative side, there are certainly some prevention characteristics. According to the organization, prevention focus is an essential part of how healthcare is structured. The clarity, influence, and certainty that Welsaam offers in this complex sector is a good thing.

Organization C

Within Wageningen, organization C is relatively small with fewer than five professional employees. However, they are active in more than twenty different regions in the Netherlands. They usually have multiple target groups in society that they want to be of value for, but due to their limited resources in Wageningen, they have made clear choices on which areas they want to focus within Welsaam.

There are several promotion focus characteristics within the organization. There is not one specific way in which they help everyone, they are continuously looking for topics and places where their knowledge can be used to realize improvements. They put a lot of energy in keeping an eye on the changes in society. Society as a whole, including the partners of Welsaam, must be informed in how to deal with vulnerable people.

“In addition, we want to make as many organizations in Welsaam as possible aware of the fact that their policy and services need to be accessible for people with a disability” (Interviewee 5).

However, there are also some prevention focus characteristics visible. The organization has no urge to grow or participate in areas within Welsaam other than the ones they are already active in. But they do feel very responsible to do well in the areas they do participate in. They realize that the internal processes within the organization need to be professionalized to keep up with the current social healthcare industry. They do not see this as a problem and are therefore already trying to implement some frameworks.

The organization talks about Welsaam with pride. It was a challenge to work together with so many parties in the complex healthcare sector. The process of composing the new tender strategy is experienced as pleasant. It is considered as a good thing that the municipality set the boundaries and framework for this process, thus avoiding chaos. However, the organization believes it is important that all organizations have administrative freedom to meet the requirements in their own way.

“I understand they [the municipality] have some say and I understand that they want to determine the effect or result, but they shouldn’t determine how the professional organizations operate, that is our job” (Interviewee 5).

In this small organization, which exhibits characteristics of both a promotion and a prevention focus, there seems to be no objection to Welsaam's prevention characteristics, as long as they retain administrative freedom in the provision of care. Welsaam's prevention features are categorized as obvious and useful, to prevent chaos in the complex social domain.

Organization D

With approximately eighty departments throughout the Netherlands, organization D is one of the nationally most active organizations within Welsaam. They mainly depend on volunteers, yet several professionals work in each department to guarantee quality. These various departments often have partly overarching coordinating boards.

Several promotion focus characteristics seem to be part of the organization. They try to transfer their knowledge on six social care themes to their affiliated volunteers. This way, they are continuously looking for an opportunity to further help society develop. Which of these six themes they focus on per department depends on the needs of the region. The aim is to provide short-term care, make people self-reliant and ensure that they can do things independently.

"The care we provide is really to teach people to become self-reliant" (Interviewee 7).

However, there also seem to be some prevention focus characteristics. The process of matching affiliated volunteers with those in need can be very complex and tricky. The organization wants to protect itself against any possible misconduct or accusations, therefore the volunteers must be educated to know their rights and responsibilities. For example, they are taught to what extent they may have access to people's privacy-related information. The contact process between volunteer and care recipient is closely monitored and analysed to identify areas for improvement.

The more administrative side of the organization talks about Welsaam in a positive and confident manner. Because they are active in several themes, the organization has extensive experience with the value Welsaam has for them. They argue that one of the positive aspects of the partnership Welsaam is that organizations can exchange information of people in need of care. This allows the organization to reach its target group. The tender process is categorized as difficult, due to the many opinions and parties involved. But according to the organization they handled it well. They are proud of what Welsaam has achieved in recent years. It is fine that the municipality draws up the requirements that Welsaam must meet. But it is essential that the organization retains the freedom to make choices about how they are going to meet these requirements. If the criteria of the municipality would not meet these standards and values, they would never be a partner of Welsaam.

The more executive part of the organization seems to be less positive about Welsaam. The process of the new tender caused feelings of confusion and ambiguity. It is a pity that many organizations act in the interest of their own organization instead of in the interest of the overall well-being of Welsaam. In addition, they feel there is a lack of a clear vision, with money being the leading factor. It should be noted that this negative opinion appears to be partly due to the limited knowledge that the respondent who took part in this study has on Welsaam.

“I think Welsaam was created to be able to jointly organize the welfare offer in Wageningen. I never really delved into it, in that sense, but I rely on what I see and on my daily contact” (Interviewee 6).

The organization seems to have characteristics of both a promotion and prevention focus. Promotion when looking at what they want to achieve and prevention in terms of implementations, having to remain credible and thus coloring within the lines to not harm the organization. Welsaam's prevention focus is seen as a good thing from the administrative positions, otherwise it will never be possible to build something so wonderful with so many parties. But the executive side of the organization is less positive about Welsaam, marking the requirements they have to meet exhausting and the overall process messy.

Organization E

Organization E is relatively small and operates locally within Wageningen. With a handful of employees and a focus on three social care themes, they try to be the overarching spill in the entire local volunteer field. Their main aim is to connect people who need help with people who are willing to provide this help. Furthermore, they also give advice on working practices to small volunteer organizations in the area.

Characteristics of the organization are in line with a promotion focus. Because they focus on three themes, there is a lot of room for implementing new ideas and for quick changes. They want to keep track of what is going on in society and help smaller voluntary organizations with the knowledge they acquire.

“There are roughly four hundred voluntary organizations in Wageningen, in all walks of life, and we try to support them as best we can to become more resilient” (Interviewee 8).

Possible due to the small scale, within the organization there seem to be many informal contact moments without tight frameworks.

When speaking of Welsaam, the overall satisfaction of organization E with the process of the new tender is low. The process involves a lot of pressure and frustration due to the obligations and practices that are enforced. The organization stresses that improvements in the process must ensure that all partners of Welsaam feel equal. In the ideal situation, care should work through informal and accessible contact, it should be easy for people to ask for help. Otherwise, you can never really be of value for the people who need it:

“Care has become something almost inaccessible, tucked away in an ivory tower.

Organizations and people in the social domain consider themselves very accessible, but guess what? This is not the case at all. And we need to get them to see this” (Interviewee 8).

They also think they could have contacted and collaborated with many partners without Welsaam. According to them, Welsaam is not necessary to achieve a partnership.

The organization seems to have a negative image of the partnership Welsaam. The obligations in working practices and mandatory contact moments are cause for irritation. Between the organization and Welsaam, there are major differences regarding the current working process and the organization's ideal working process. The prevention characteristics of Welsaam do not match the promotion characteristics of organization E.

4.4 Stakeholder engagement themes

Within the analyses per organization by applying an inductive method, three themes regarding the concept of stakeholder engagement emerged. These are the themes all organizations participating in this study seem to refer to when asked to provide general information on the network organization or when asked to say why they are or are not satisfied. However, the organizations did not always share the same opinion. These themes are analyzed to provide insight into the engagement of the different stakeholders of Welsaam. Firstly, one of the themes that emerged is satisfaction with the initiatives established by the network organization. Four of the organization feel that Welsaam is essential to establish connections with partners active in the social domain. Without these connections, they do not think that they would be able to add any value. At the same time, one organization doubts the usefulness of Welsaam's existence. The second theme that emerged is the overall satisfaction with the negotiation process of Welsaam. The organizations mainly refer to the way in which the new tender was established. What the mutual conversations were like, how decisions were made and what tasks they had to fulfill. Opinions vary widely, some organizations are very positive and proud of what has been achieved while others are annoyed with the lengthy discussions and decision-making process in addition to limits they have to adhere to. The third theme

that emerged is satisfaction with Welsaam's authority. The organizations refer several times to the extent to which the municipality has influence on the choices Welsaam makes and to what extent Welsaam has the freedom to make its own decisions. For example, various organizations indicate that it is essential for further participation that freedom remains in the choices regarding the execution of services.

4.5 Comparing the organizations

The previous sections provided insight into the characteristics of each organization in terms of regulatory focus, stakeholder engagement and the three themes of stakeholder engagement. This information will be used to make a comparison between the different organizations of Welsaam regarding these concepts followed by the conclusion (on these concepts) in chapter 5.

The partner organizations of Welsaam have various characteristics of both types of regulatory focus. Both characteristics of a promotion focus and prevention focus often appear in different ways. Four organizations (A, B, C, D) have both characteristics of a prevention and promotion focus, and therefore partly fit with the regulatory focus of Welsaam. Within two of these organizations (B and D) there seems to be a difference between the focus of the executive and administrative sides. At one of the other organizations (A), features of a promotion focus are especially present in processes within their own organisation. However, when looking at their regulatory focus in the negotiation process of Welsaam as a whole, features of a prevention focus mainly come to the fore. Within one organization (E) only characteristics of a promotion focus emerge, which is why they usually experience a non-fit with the regulatory focus of Welsaam. None of the organizations examined in this research is a complete fit for having a prevention focus.

The organizations have various opinions about the three analyzed themes of stakeholder engagement. Two organizations (B and C) seem to have strong stakeholder engagement. These organizations speak positively about the initiatives, the process, and the authority of Welsaam. Obligations are essential and necessary in the social domain for things to run smoothly. Within one organization (D), there seems to be a difference in engagement between the executive and administrative sides. The administrative side of the organization seems to be more engaged with Welsaam than the executive side. The executive side finds the negotiation process messy and exhausting because of the criteria set. Within one organization (A) there are different signals regarding the engagement with Welsaam. On the one hand, they see Welsaam as essential for their ability to contribute to the social domain in Wageningen, but on the other hand tasks and responsibilities in the negotiation process hinder the organization's ambitions. One organization (E)

appears to have a low engagement. They have a negative opinion with regard to all themes of stakeholder engagement. All obligations associated with Welsaam are viewed negatively.

5. Conclusion

This research aims to answer the following research question: *How does a regulatory fit between the communication of the network Welsaam and the stakeholders of Welsaam influence the stakeholder engagement?* The different themes of stakeholder engagement, namely 'Satisfaction with the authority', 'Satisfaction with the initiatives', and 'Satisfaction with the negotiating process', are influenced in several ways by the appearance of a regulatory fit/non-fit. First, a regulatory fit between the network and the stakeholder organizations can positively influence engagement, because the organizations feel understood and therefore respond positively. Second, it appears that a non-fit between the prevention focus characteristics of the network and the promotion focus characteristics of the participating organizations can cause negative feelings and irritation, which negatively influences the stakeholder engagement. Third, it appears that a partial non-fit between the prevention focus characteristics of the network and the partly promotional focus characteristics of the organization sometimes positively influences the engagement. The fixed frameworks that the network offers are experienced as a pleasant contrast to the many freedoms and the resulting ambiguities that sometimes exist in organizations with a promotion focus. With regard to these findings it is essential to mention that the organizational engagement, regulatory focus and a possible influence of a regulatory fit/non-fit on engagement seems to be partly influenced by the large organizational differences regarding scale, size, financial dependence, professionalization, and contribution to the various themes of the network. Furthermore, within a single organization, there can be a difference in stakeholder engagement and/or regulatory focus depending of the department.

6. Discussion

6.1 Theoretical reflection

The theoretical finding that a regulatory non-fit has a negative effect is consistent with many other studies on the subject (Higgins, 2000). This research contributes to the existing literature, by finding this relation in an NGO network.

However, one of the main conclusions of this study is inconsistent with the general literature on the subject. As mentioned in the conclusion, it is not just a regulatory fit that can positively influence stakeholder engagement. The organizations that partly have a promotion focus are very positive about some of Welsaam's prevention focus characteristics. In these cases, a regulatory non-fit has a positive influence on how engaged they are with Welsaam. The possibility of a regulatory non-fit having positive results is not widely studied. However, there are studies that seem to support this relation in some way and therefore make this study's conclusion more plausible. It is concluded that people who experience a regulatory non-fit are less likely to be satisfied with their work than the people who experience a regulatory fit. The non-fit makes them consciously consider whether they have contributed enough and motivates them to continue to deliver more (Levine et al., 2016; Vaughn et al., 2006). The people experiencing a non-fit continue to evaluate their own thought and decisions, making them feel less confident. When evaluating they are often more open to listen to other ideas and opinions. They adapt their previous judgments based on all insights gained, resulting in a less biased and more inclusive idea or judgement. Therefore, they adapt their previous judgment more often to the environment (Fridman et al., 2016; Koenig et al., 2009). These findings may provide some additional explanation for the conclusion drawn in this study. The organizations who experience negative feelings due to a regulatory non-fit may evaluate their own choices more which may help them to feel less negative about these choices. Further research should focus on the positive consequences a regulatory non-fit might have to see if a general statement on the topic can be made.

As mentioned in the conclusion, three themes related to the concept of stakeholder engagement emerged during analysis, namely: satisfaction with the initiatives, satisfaction with the negotiating process, and satisfaction with the authority. These themes appear to be a combination of the multiple theories discussed in chapter 3. Many typologies related to stakeholder engagement focus on the tasks that stakeholders are allowed to perform (Green & Hunton-Clarke., 2003; Pedersen., 2006). This approach seems to fit one of the emerging themes: 'Satisfaction with the authority'. The stakeholder engagement levels described by PMI (2017) are more focused on how stakeholders feel about processes that take place in the organizations. This approach seems more in line with the

themes 'Satisfaction with the negotiating process' and 'Satisfaction with the initiatives'. The findings of this study show that it might be too short sighted to approach stakeholder engagement solely in terms of the tasks stakeholders can perform or their feelings about processes, as done in current scientific literature. The inductive approach to stakeholder engagement shows that combining the theories is very relevant. Future research should focus on validating these three emerging themes in different industries. This allows necessary adjustments or additions to emerge. This typology of stakeholder engagement could clarify this complex scientific concept.

In addition, interesting findings emerged regarding the state of affairs within the network Welsaam. It is not always clear just how different organizations within the same network can be. Within Welsaam, there can be major differences in the way organizations are structured. A number of characteristics emerged that influence how great the impact of Welsaam is for the partner organizations, namely: the organization's level of scale, size, financial dependence, professionalization, and contribution to the various themes. These structural differences seem to influence how the network partners assess situations and this can lead to tensions. Prior to conducting this study on Welsaam, the differences mentioned above were not taken into account when determining the regulatory focus or stakeholder engagement. But for further research into NGO networks, it seems relevant to consider the impact these organizational differences can have on the development of tensions between the different partner organizations. In literature, it is widely recognized that NGO networks are a breeding ground for tensions (Lewis et al., 2010; Nathues et al., 2022; Sullivan et al., 2012). One of the reasons for these tensions to arise are the differences between the organizations within the network. The findings mentioned above can be included in future research to improve the cooperation within networks of NGOs. It might be interesting to see whether a relationship between a regulatory fit/non-fit and stakeholder engagement can be found when taking the different characteristics of the organizations into account. Purely looking at the influence of a regulatory fit seems less suitable for drawing firm conclusions.

6.2 Practical implications

These practical implications are aimed at increasing stakeholder engagement and will therefore be focused on the three themes identified for this concept. As indicated earlier, these themes are: satisfaction with the initiatives, satisfaction with the negotiating process, and satisfaction with the authority. Within Welsaam, policy can be pursued to focus primarily on these themes, with an annual evaluation of the engagement of its stakeholders.

With regard to the theme 'satisfaction with the authority', it is especially apparent that it is of great importance for the organizations that freedom remains in the choices with regard to the implementation of services. Welsaam can take this into account and make this importance clear to the municipality at consultation meetings. One way to increase the flow of communications with the municipality is to engage more independent process facilitators. These process facilitators can reduce the pressure on the organization because they put their energy into getting the message across to the municipality. These facilitators can give organizations the confidence that they will be heard in the negotiating process. It is also pivotal that these facilitators provide insight in the decision-making process, as decisions made by Consensus can cause a lot of uncertainty (Lewis et al., 2010).

With regard to the theme 'Satisfaction with the negotiating process, it seems that many improvements can be made within Welsaam to help partner organizations better understand each other's preferences and organizational structure. The organizations do not always follow each other's train of thought which can lead to tension within Welsaam. For example, some organizations do not understand why certain processes take a long time, while other organizations want to have everything to be arranged to the last detail. An important goal of communication should be to get to know each other deeply, this also ensures the building of a trusting relationship. The use of face-to-face communication plays an important role here (Lewis et al., 2010). For Welsaam, it might be a good idea to organize a mandatory meeting for all partner organizations at the beginning of each year. During this meeting, it can be discussed which themes will be focussed on and whether changes can be expected the coming year. Furthermore, all network partners can introduce themselves and their ideas annual plans to the other organization of Welsaam. By doing this, hopefully greater understanding of each other's work habits can be achieved, resulting in more empathy toward each other. A positive consequence could be that less tension will arise in a few years' time, during the new tender negotiation process.

With regard to the theme 'Satisfactions with the initiatives', it appears that most organizations feel positive about this theme. Welsaam must be aware of the positive feelings that organizations have due to the initiatives that have arisen from Welsaam and use this by continuing to communicate

what has been achieved annually. This can become one of the tasks of the process leader; informing organizations and clarifying how they think initiatives can be improved.

6.3 Methodological reflection

Different methodological choices have had a positive influence on the internal validity of this study. By using semi-structured interviews, enough useful data was collected to indicate a possible relationship between the concepts. In addition, it was very useful to speak to the process facilitator of Welsaam. This resulted in a lot of additional and useful information about the tensions and working practices within Welsaam, which was not mentioned by the other interviewees.

A limitation of this research is the attempt to determine the type of regulatory focus at the organizational level. This was taken into account when formulating the questions, trying to find the general organizational opinions and not the personal opinions of the interviewees. Nevertheless, it may have been difficult for the interviewees not to be influenced by their personal regulatory focus at times. Therefore, the personal regulatory focus of the respondents may have had some influence on the established regulatory focus of the organizations. This could have influenced the conclusions drawn and possibly limited this study's internal validity. In addition, determining the regulatory focus of an organization has turned out to be very complex, because it can differ depending on the situation. As a result, the established regulatory focus of Welsaam and each organization partly depends on the interpretation of the researcher. To limit this effect on internal validity, it has been attempted to assess all results in the same way.

Furthermore, there were differences in the organizational availability of documentation, internal knowledge, and working experience with Welsaam. Therefore, some determinations of organizational regulatory focus and stakeholder engagement are based on more information than others. In order to not allow this to affect the internal validity, it has been decided in some cases to speak to a second person from the same organization. In addition, the document analysis was performed prior to the interviews. When little information was available about an organization, additional questions on this topic could be asked during the interview.

During the first interview, it became clear that it was difficult to question the dimensions of 'Feelings when failing or succeeding', even after making some adjustments to the questions. Fortunately, a lot of information on the other dimension of regulatory focus was revealed. Therefore, the effect on the internal validity is small. Perhaps the solution to examine the dimension of 'Feelings' is to make observations at the organizations. This allows the researcher to experience the atmosphere regarding this dimension within the organization.

The detailed method of this study and the available transcripts of the interviews and document analysis makes this research reliable. Other researchers can use most of the collected data to conduct their analysis. Some of the documents used in the analysis are publicly available, internal documents must be requested. In addition, anyone can use the prepared questions when researching the topic.

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Appendix 1: Informed Consent

Doel van het onderzoek:

Dit interview wordt gehouden ten behoeve van mijn afstudeeronderzoek van de master Strategic Management aan de Radboud Universiteit. Ik wilde me graag richten op samenwerkingen tussen organisaties en zo kwam ik via contacten bij [REDACTED] bij Welsaam terecht. Jullie organisatie wekte mijn interesse, aangezien jullie al enkele jaren onderdeel zijn van Welsaam. Het onderzoek zal maximaal vijfenveertig minuten duren. De eerste vragen zullen meer gericht zijn op de werkwijze en voorkeuren van de eigen organisatie, vervolgens ga ik wat dingen vragen over Welsaam. Zo ben ik benieuwd hoe jullie als organisatie naar het samenwerkingsverband kijken en tegen welke dingen jullie aanlopen. Ik heb wat vaste vragen, maar ga natuurlijk ook in op de antwoorden die u geeft. Voelt u zich daarom vrij om alle naar uw idee relevante informatie te delen.

Uw medewerking:

Er zal zorgvuldig worden omgegaan met alle informatie die u in dit interview verschaft. De gegeven antwoorden worden anoniem verwerkt en er zullen geen enkele persoonlijke gevolgen aan verbonden zijn. U bent geheel vrij in de keuze om een vraag wel of niet te beantwoorden. Indien u hiermee akkoord gaat zal het interview worden opgenomen, met als doel de interviews uit te kunnen schrijven en analyseren. Deze opnames zullen direct na het uitschrijven zorgvuldig worden verwijderd. De anonieme uitgeschreven data zal om de betrouwbaarheid van dit onderzoek te garanderen worden bewaard. Het eindresultaat van dit onderzoek zal alvorens het openbaar beschikbaar wordt gesteld eerst worden gedeeld met alle deelnemende organisaties. Indien er bezwaren zijn zullen er aanpassingen worden doorgevoerd.

Door het tekenen van dit document geeft uw te kennen dat u bewust meedoet aan dit onderzoek. Ook na het ondertekenen kunt u nog altijd afzien van uw deelname. Indien u nog vragen heeft kunt u altijd contact opnemen via onderstaande gegevens.

Ik ga akkoord met deelname aan het onderzoek.

Naam:

Handtekening:

Datum:

Appendix 2: Pre-formulated interview schedule

Organisatie

- Hoe zou u de doelstellingen van de organisatie beschrijven? (lange/korte termijn/meerjaren plan).
- Wat zijn hier de belangrijke pijlers in?
- Hoe wordt er gemeten of de doelen worden behaald?
- Hoe gaan jullie om met succes of falen? (voorbeeld/welke emoties horen hierbij)

Welsaam

- Zou u kunnen uitleggen wat Welsaam is? en wat het beoogt te bereiken? (ontstaan)
- Vindt u dat Welsaam een toegevoegde waarde heeft voor de zorgkwaliteit van Wageningen? (is het belangrijk voor jullie?)
- Wat is jullie rol binnen Welsaam? (Bepalend/actief/processen/keuzes).
- Zijn er mensen die zowel bij jullie bedrijf als bij Welsaam werken? (Hoe is het om de taken van de organisatie en Welsaam te combineren?)
- Hoe vindt u dat de samenwerking de afgelopen jaren is verlopen?
- Zijn in uw ogen de doelen behaald? Bent u tevreden met deze doelen?

Verbeteringen

- Ben je het eens met hoe Welsaam communiceert? (hoe worden jullie benaderd/wie heeft de leiding)
- Zou je graag andere dingen willen zien/veranderingen in de volgende processen? (Doelstellingen, besluitvormingsproces)

Appendix 3: Coding tree regulatory focus

