



Why join governance networks?

The case of Global Parliament of Mayors and Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten

The role of boundary spanning in the perceived legitimacy and attractiveness

Msc Bestuurskunde - Governance en Management van Complexe Systemen

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Summary

Globalization makes the world smaller, prone to become borderless, and interdependencies arise to combat new complexities. With fading borders and transcending issues, an era of networks has risen. Networks are considered horizontal cooperation between autonomous actors. This rise of networks requires new forms of governance because traditional ways of hierarchy and market no longer suffice. As a result, network management approaches focusing on guidance, interactions, and exploring content have been developed. A concept that is mentioned frequently in the network management literature is boundary spanning. Because governance networks are on a voluntary basis, it is important that they are perceived as legitimate and attractive for their viability.

This thesis will study two networks: the Global parliament of mayors of mayors (GPM) and the Vereniging Nederlandse Gemeente (VNG) are governance networks that target local governments. GPM is a supranational network which has been established in 2017, while the VNG is a steady national network that exists for over 100 years. This thesis looks at the way boundary spanning is present in the GPM and VNG, but also how it affects the perceived legitimacy and attractiveness. The aim of looking at these two networks is to provide more insights in legitimacy and attractiveness of networks. Furthermore the comparison of both networks can serve as an example for the GPM. Consequently, the following research question has been formulated:

How does boundary spanning influence the throughput legitimacy and attractiveness of the GPM and VNG, and how do these networks differ from each other?

A qualitative research approach is applied to gain in-depth knowledge on the perspectives and opinions of the network members. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with mayors, aldermen, secretariat employees, and municipal officers will constitute the data.

The main findings show a positive influence of boundary spanning on legitimacy and attractiveness. It appears that more presence of boundary spanning leads to higher levels of legitimacy and attractiveness, especially with regards to trust and dependency. In this aspect the GPM and VNG differ from each other. The data indicate that the VNG is perceived as more legitimate and attractive than the GPM. Moreover, the VNG shows more and a larger variety of boundary spanning than the VNG. These results lead to the following practical recommendations to the GPM:

1. Create more committees
2. Ambassadors per theme
3. Increase trust
4. Create some kind of dependency

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1. Introduction

As time passes, our world becomes increasingly complex. Globalization makes the world smaller, prone to become borders less, and interdependencies arise to combat new complexities. With fading borders and transcending issues, an era of networks has risen. Governance networks are considered as horizontal cooperation between autonomous actors. Governance networks are established in response to the growing societal complexity and changing dynamic which affects the efficient government of society. These complex issues ask for more than individual goals, they require collective action and governance (O'Tool, 1997; Provan and Kenis, 2008).

Scholars have widely recognized the considerable advantages of governance networks (Provan and Kenis, 2008). These advantages include more efficient use of resources, enhanced learning, increased capacity of dealing with complex problems, and increased competitiveness (Alter and Hage, 1993; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Next to that, networks have great potential for proactive governance, because issues and opportunities can be identified at an early stage enabling adjustment to complexity (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000:114; Kooiman, 2000: 155f.).

Klijn (2008:506) maintains that the trend of horizontal governance will in the end “transform nations into network societies in which interdependence and horizontal relations are paramount”. He claims that this perspective is supported by the increase of strategic alliance and a growing attention for co-governance and public-private partnerships (Osborne 2000; Pollitt 2003) in order to deal with the complexity of a constantly changing environment. This rise of networks requires new forms of governance because traditional ways of hierarchy and market no longer suffice (Scharpf, 1994; Torfing, 2005).

As a result, network management approaches that focus on guidance, interactions, and exploring content have been developed (Blanco, et al. 2011). A concept that is mentioned frequently in the network management literature is boundary spanning. Boundary spanners can be identified as connective agents, playing an important role in a fragmented horizontal governance network, where they act in and between the organization and its environment (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014). Robbins and Coulter (2002) underscore the importance of boundary spanning activities for the management of stakeholder relations. These activities are interrelated and take place on each side of the boundary (Van Meerkerk, et al 2014).

Networks are characterized by tensions, such as legitimacy which can be influenced by network governance. Legitimacy is often viewed as an element to maintain viability and the

status of an organization (Suchman, 1995; Low and Johnston, 2008) but less attention has been paid to its importance in networks (Provan and Kenis, 2008). Human and Provan (2000:244) emphasize the importance of developing internal legitimacy between actors in the networks.

“ If participants do not see interactions and coordinated efforts as being a legitimate way of conducting business, with potential benefits from these interactions, then the network is likely to exist in name only with little real commitment by participants to network-level goals and outcomes”.

1.1 Problem statement

Currently there are numerous amounts of governance networks worldwide. The membership of the majority of city or municipal networks is on a voluntary basis and it is therefore assumed that the networks need to possess characteristics that are attractive and/or legitimate to obtain a membership base. The GPM is a mayors only network that has been recently established in 2017. In order for its existence and its advocacy power, it is crucial that the membership base increases rapidly. Subsequently, the following questions rose in the GPM: Why do members decide to join a network, and how can the membership base of a network be increased. During my internship at Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), these questions were the start of writing this thesis. Since comparing all city/municipal networks surpasses the scope of this research, the focus will be on two networks. The supranational network Global parliament of Mayors (GPM), and the national network Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG). VNG has been selected as second network because, just like GPM, it targets local governments and only local officials can become a member. But opposite to the GPM, the VNG is mature with a large membership base that can account for all Dutch municipalities as it members. Therefore, not only can a comparison provide more insights in networks' attractiveness and legitimacy, but the VNG can also serve as an example for the GPM. The fact that membership of the VNG is on voluntary basis and that all Dutch municipalities are members, implies that the network is to certain extend legitimate and attractive.

According to Torfing (2008), the horizontal cooperation in networks is held together because of the expected benefits of shared resources and joint action on one hand and mutual trust on the other hand. Therefore this thesis conceptualizes attractiveness as perceived added value, dependency, and trust. Legitimacy can be divided into several dimensions, this thesis

will only consider throughput legitimacy which describes the legitimacy of the internal processes of governance and looks at the democratic quality. The focus lies on throughput legitimacy, because this research is interested in the perceptions on the governance and management of networks and therefore will focus on the legitimacy of governance and decision making processes. Furthermore, the context in which this research takes place is less fitting for research on input and output legitimacy. Input legitimacy emphasizes accountability in cooperation that includes citizen involvement. However, GPM and VNG solely consists of cooperation between local government units without citizen participation. Furthermore, output legitimacy focuses on the acceptance of the outcomes. This form of legitimacy cannot be researched yet, because at the time of research, the GPM was still at its developmental stage with no outcomes that could serve a proper research in this area.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to gain more knowledge on what makes networks attractive and legitimate. Furthermore, it studies boundary spanning in the network, and if this way of network management can increase the attractiveness and legitimacy of a network. By studying this in two networks the aim is to gain knowledge on the studied concepts in different context, but also to learn more about increasing and maintaining network membership bases, and to initiate mutual learning between networks. Consequently, the following research question has been formulated:

How does boundary spanning influence the throughput legitimacy and attractiveness of the GPM and VNG, and how do these networks differ from each other?

In order to answer the main research question the following sub questions have been deducted:

1. What makes GPM and VNG, a supranational and national networks with local members, attractive to its members?
2. How do members perceive the throughput legitimacy of the GPM and VNG, and how is this related to the networks' attractiveness?
3. Who can be identified as boundary spanners, what are their main boundary spanning activities?

1.3 Scientific relevance

The variables stem from different streams of theory. Boundary spanning as network management is borrowed from organizational and complexity theory, legitimacy has its origin in systems theory, and attractiveness is derived from the social exchange theory. The combination of theories makes this an interdisciplinary research on how legitimacy and attractiveness can be increased by network management in the form of boundary spanning. This thesis is scientifically relevant in the sense that it adds new knowledge to the complexity management theory in relation to attractiveness and legitimacy. Attractiveness of governance networks, and especially in relation to network management, seems to be a scarcely studied topic. Regarding legitimacy, the majority of previous research focused on the input and output legitimacy, and according to Schmidt (2013:5) the study of what is occurring “inside the black box of governance” is still lacking. Furthermore Kern and Bulkely (2009) claim that there has not been carried out much research regarding municipal networks, therefore this thesis will focus on networks with local government members only.

1.4 Practical relevance

By researching the possible influence of boundary spanning on the attractiveness and legitimacy of networks, this thesis intends to provide useful insights on how networks could be managed in order to improve their attractiveness and legitimacy. It will look at who are considered boundary spanners, what their main activities are and how these affect the perceived legitimacy and attractiveness. The study takes place in two contexts to gain broader knowledge on the relationship under study, but also for the GPM to possibly learn from the VNG. This can lead to practical advice, especially for GPM. As a starting network it still needs to extend its membership base. In this thesis, special attention is given to the question whether and how boundary spanning (identified as a specific manifestation of complexity management) can increase the network's attractiveness and the number of membership applications.

1.5 Thesis outline

In the next chapter the context of this research will be described. Then a literature study will be presented, leading to the conceptual model of this thesis. The methodology is elaborated on in chapter 3. After that chapter 4 presents case descriptions together with results on the

legitimacy and attractiveness in both networks, which is followed by an analysis on the relationship between boundary spanning and, legitimacy and attractiveness in chapter 5. The limitations of this research will be discussed in the discussion chapter. Finally in the conclusion the sub questions and main research question will be answered, and at last practical recommendations are formulated.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the existing literature on interactive governance management, and the network's legitimacy and attractiveness. The literature study forms the theoretical basis for the conceptual model, which will serve as the framework for the analysis.

2.1 Governance networks

To define a governance network scholars have come up with several characteristics (Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos, 2014):

- Sørensen and Torfing (2009) claim that governance networks emerge and evolve around issues that require collective actions because it is not solvable by one actor. Furthermore these public issues are boundary crossing. These boundary can be between: organizations, jurisdictions and/or functions, and have a multi value character (Kickert et al. 1997).
- The second characteristic is the high interdependency between the actors in the network. To solve the issues they have to combine their knowledge and resources to achieve positive outcomes. (Agranoff and McGuire 2001)
- The interdependency asks for durable interactions between different actors with various interests. (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004);
- Finally, because of the autonomous actors, steering within the network is complex. Furthermore the limited accountability (Provan and Kenis 2008), and diverging perceptions about policy problems and their solutions increase (Teisman, 2000) the complexity.

These presumptions lead to the following definition of governance networks: “more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutually dependent actors, which form around public issues, and which are formed, maintained, and changed through interactions between the involved actors” (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004 in Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014: 5). According to O'Toole Jr, & Meier (2004:470), in a network “actors are often located in bureaucracies that are in turn connected with other organizations outside the lines of formal authority”.

2.1.1 Stakeholders

Every governance network consists of multiple stakeholders, each having their own interests. These stakeholders and interests are separated by so called boundaries. In transnational municipal network literature several internal and external stakeholders are mentioned, including national, sub-national and local governments. But it is not limited to that. Other networks, organizations and citizens could be considered stakeholders too. Stakeholders are characterized as “individuals, groups and organizations who are affected by or can affect parts” of the studied phenomenon. (Reed, Graves, Dandy, Posthumus, Hubacek, Morris and Stringer, 2009:1933).

The members of a governance network are very diverse, stemming from different organizations, and possibly following diverging organizational goals. Therefore, the articulation of a common goal, which all members agree upon is essential. This translates into collective action, in which actors pursue their own goals, as much as a common goal. Common goals structure decision-making processes in the governance network, and strengthen the relationships between actors. Provan & Kenis (2007) advocate the importance of common goals and relate it to the effectiveness of governance networks (p.3). Their findings showed that there is a link between the existence of common goals and the commitment and level of cooperation between members of a governance network (p11).

There are several reasons that can explain the lack concerted action, and with that, hinder cooperation (Klijn & Koppenjan, pp.143-144). First, if actors are not aware that they are dependent on other actors to tackle a policy problem, they will be less likely to engage in the activities of the network (p.143). Second, if policy issues dealt with by a governance network do not rank high on the agenda of a member, it will also result in lower engagement. This can be the case, for instance, if costs and benefits of involvement seem unfavorable (p.144).

2.1.2 Boundaries

Actors in networks are confronted with several boundaries. In order to delineate and carry out this research it is essential to set the boundaries. On top of that, describing the boundaries within the networks is necessary for the research on boundary spanning and legitimacy. Boundaries are not solely investigated based on their position in the studied systems but also on their permeability. Boundary permeability is expected to be positively related to legitimacy (Hogg & Hains (1996). There are different kinds of boundaries in an organization separating

subsystems from each other but also from external (sub) systems (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981). In their research on boundary spanning leadership Ernst and Chrobot-Mason (2010) came up with the following five boundaries:

1. Vertical
2. Horizontal
3. Stakeholder
4. Demographic
5. Geographic

Vertical boundaries can be explained as hierarchies, such as title or power. Horizontal boundaries cover functions and expertise. While stakeholder boundaries separate for example organizations or partners. Differences between groups form the demographic boundaries, and the boundaries created by distance and location are called geographic boundaries.

2.2 Boundary Spanning as network management

Interactive governance is a new paradigm that came in to existence due to the fact that previous more traditional forms of management were no longer considered appropriate for this rapidly changing interdependent world. This started with a focus on inter-governmental relations in the mid-seventies of the past century by Scharpf (1978). Blanco, Lowndes and Pratchett (2011) mention the following factors in society explaining the need for new forms of governance:

- The increase of 'wicked problems' caused by the rise of complexity, dynamics and diversity of society. Rittel and Webber (1973) developed several characteristics to describe the definition of wicked problems, emphasizing that there is no clear-cut definition of this concept. Wicked problems do not have a clear set of potential solutions, there is no clear boundary of the problem and every wicked problem could possibly be a symptom of another wicked problem. Finally they state that every wicked problem is unique. Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) argue that the wickedness of problems is influenced by complexity, uncertainty, divergence and fragmentation.
- The desire for more integration in public organizations that are becoming increasingly fragmented caused by the new public management reforms in the public sector (Rhodes, 2007)

- New forms of cooperation and partnerships (Lowndes and Skelcher, 1998; Mackintosh, 1992), such as triple helix collaborations and co-production to enhance innovation but also as new sources of finance.
- A change in citizen's attitudes towards the representative forms of democracy, searching for a bigger voice (Dalton, 2005)

Governance networks tend to have a horizontal character with a relatively high interdependency between the actors, and arise due to boundary crossing issues (Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2012). The complexity of the network and the processes within the network ask for appropriate management approaches focusing on guidance, interactions, and exploring content (Blanco, et al. 2011). A concept that is mentioned frequently in the network management literature is boundary spanning which stems from the organizational literature. The existing literature offers a variety in operationalization of the concept which leads to ambiguity. In order to be able to recognize and study their presence in the GPM and VNG, the definition of boundary spanning in this present study will be elaborated on in the next sections.

2.2.1 Boundary Spanner

Already in 1978, Leifer and Delbecque emphasized the importance of boundary spanning with their basis argument that: "information about environmental contingencies needs to reach organizational decision making in order that appropriate decisions relevant to environmental conditions and contingencies may be made" (p40). Boundary spanners can be identified as connective agents, playing an important role in a fragmented horizontal governance network, where they act in and between the organization and its environment. They shape and maintain the interactions between organizations, processes, and persons (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014). Boundary spanners will try to connect organizations, processes and persons through moving between and crossing boundaries (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981:292; Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014:6). In addition, Butler, Zander, Mockaitis & Sutton (2012) emphasize the engagement of global leaders in boundary spanning activities when they act in intercultural collaborations

In this research the boundary spanning will be studied from the network theory perspective, in which the networks consist of multiple actors that act on the boundaries of their

organizations. When geographic and identity based boundaries are overcome, a third space is created that allows the members of the different groups and (sub) systems to interact (Ernst and Yip, 2009). Boundary spanners cross boundaries when they successfully interlink (sub) systems in order to gather information (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981: 290). In the perspective of global leadership, boundary spanners ought to spot the groups' different contribution and subsequently link them to the organizational goals. Boundary spanning is carried out by means of boundary spanning activities.

2.2.2 Boundary spanning activities

The study of boundary spanning activities will help recognize boundary spanning in a network. Robbins and Coulter (2002) underscore the importance of these activities for the management of stakeholder relations. Boundary spanning activities are interrelated and take place on each side of the boundary (Van Meerkerk, et al 2014). The extent of boundary spanning can be seen as the degree of the organization's adaptation to its environment. Edelenbos, van Meerkerk and Klijn (2015) claim that the following three activities are most important for boundary spanners:

- Connecting and linking persons and processes on both sides of the boundaries
- Selecting relevant information on both sides of the boundaries
- Translating information from one side of the boundary to the other

Other relevant boundary spanning activities for this research are:

- Mobilizing processes and persons (Williams, 2010)
- Streamline information and processes between both sides of the boundary (Quick and Feldman, 2014)
- Innovating (Quick, et al, 2014)

2.1.2.1 Connecting and linking

This boundary spanning activity entails the activation of a relation between two actors that would have not been established otherwise. The aim is to create durable relations in which the boundary spanner shares personal perspectives and experiences (Williams 2002:115). Tushman and Scanlan (1981) argue that boundary spanners need to be able to communicate effectively with the external area but also internally. Furthermore, capacity to listen actively

allows the boundary spanner to gain more insight knowledge enabling him/her to make new connections (Williams, 2002:115 in; Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos, 2014:7).

2.2.2.2 Selecting information

Another important activity of boundary spanners is selecting and interchanging information between organizations, persons, and processes to enable contact between them. (Tushman & Scanlan, 1981:291). Selecting the right information that the organization needs from outside sources, but also decide on the disposition of information to whom, when, and which parts should be shared with others (Jemison, 1984).

2.2.2.3 Translating information

Boundary spanning activities also consist of knowledge transfer and translation. Information that is collected from the external environment, thus outside needs to be adapted to a language that is closer the organization's language. Tushman and Scalan (1981:291) argue that "communication across boundaries is difficult and prone to bias and distortion". For this reason Mermino and Rowe (2012) claim that it is important to understand the organizations, persons and processes outside their own organization or subsystem. This will lead to acknowledgement of value differences in terms of culture, profession, mind-set and role.

2.2.2.4 Mobilizing

Boundary spanners creating a shared identity and determine a common purpose in order to develop a community and to increase engagement. They mobilize the sub systems in an interest alignment, or trying to stimulate a common vision. But also mobilize support for the network (Cross,Ernst, and Pasmore, 2013).

2.2.2.5 Streamlining

In a network there are differences present, and aligning these differences involves "recognizing the presence of distinctions and finding ways to enhance connections across them. This practice involves accepting the differences and using them as a basis for pursuing new, shared interests"(Quick and Feldman, 2014:678). Ideally it brings together different subsystems, to benefit from the differences in order to gain synergy and complementarities.

2.2.2.6 Innovating

Complex public policy problems are no longer sufficed by the more traditional approaches, that is why networks emerge and boundary spanners have the important role of the innovator. In 1988 already, Challis, Klein, Fuller, Henwood, Plowden, Webb and Wistow emphasized the boundary spanners' entrepreneurial and innovative capabilities. Problems and solutions are brought that would otherwise remain in the chaotic bubble of the policy streams (deLeon 1996, p. 508). They are "skilled at coupling problems, policies and politics, particularly opportunistically in response to opening policy windows" (Williams, 2002:110). Innovating activities are characterized by amongst others creativity, new ideas and lateral thinking with opportunism and visionary thinking (Leadbeater and Goss 1998:15).

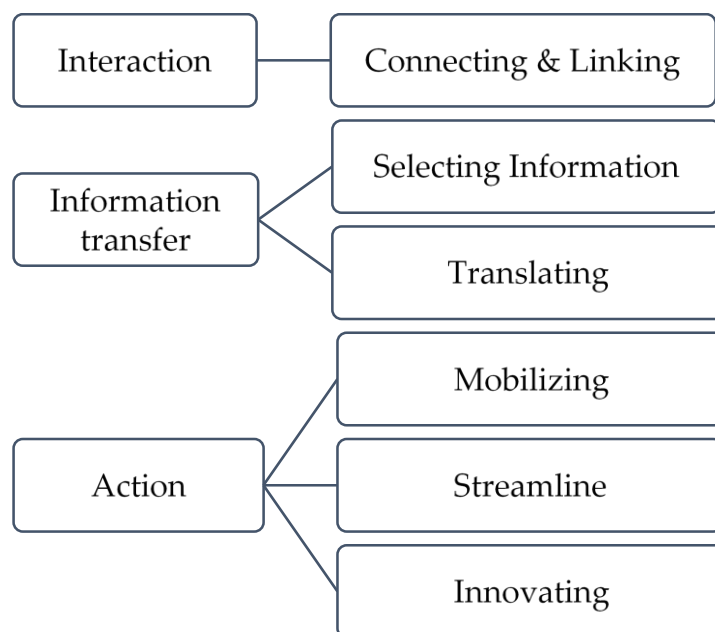


Figure 1. Schematic overview boundary spanning activities

2.3 Legitimacy

One of the reasons to research legitimacy is because of the importance of "perceptions, attitudes, and trust vis-à-vis government arrangements" (Christensen, Laegreid and Rykkja, 2016: 887). The definition of legitimacy is touched upon by many scholars. A scholar that formulated one of the fundamental ideas is Weber. He defined legitimacy as "a set of obligations, or as a desirable model of action" (Johnson 2004:8). This definition is extended by describing legitimacy as the "acceptance of norms, values, beliefs, and procedures as matters of objective fact, desirable "and the way things are supposed to be. (Dornbusch and Scott,

1975; Zelditch, 2001 in Johnson, 2004: 8). It can be seen as the “degree of cultural support for an organization” Meyer and Scott (1983, p. 201). Thus in short legitimacy can be conceptualized as:

“perceptions of whether the actions of the authorities are desirable, proper, or appropriate within socially constructed systems of norms, values, and beliefs”
(Jann, 2016; Suchman, 1995 in Christensen, et al., 2016:888).

Johnson (2004) introduces three theoretical approaches to legitimacy, leading to a variety of definitions. The first approach emphasizes the validity of authority structure, the second approach addresses the development and stabilization of status hierarchies within decision making groups. The third approach is an institutional theory that concentrates on organizational legitimacy. The present study will build on the last approach because its focal point is on perceived organizational legitimacy of the network.

Legitimacy can be divided into several dimensions: input legitimacy, output legitimacy and throughput legitimacy (Scharpf 1999; Schmidt 2013). This thesis will only address throughput legitimacy, because the perceived legitimacy of the internal processes is most relevant to look at. For that reason input and output legitimacy will not be considered. Input entails the input of citizens towards decision making and accountability structures (Dryzek, 2000) and does not say anything about legitimacy experienced by members. Moreover, output legitimacy is related to the acceptance of the outcomes. Output legitimacy would be relevant for this research on experienced legitimacy, however it falls outside the scope of this thesis. In addition to that, the GPM was only set up recently with little outcomes so far, making it impossible to measure output legitimacy. Finally, it is difficult to determine the loci of power in governance networks due to its a-constitutional nature (Edelenbos, van Meerkerk, & Klijn 2013) as a result of which is opted for studying the procedural processes within governance networks.

2.3.1 Throughput legitimacy

The majority of the academic literature seems to concentrate on input and output legitimacy whereby the study of what is going on “inside the black box of governance”(Schmidt, 2013:5) is lacking. Therefore the concept of throughput legitimacy was borrowed from systems theory. Hereby, the subject of study is not only the processes of governance and its quality but also

about the quality of interaction among the stakeholders (Schmidt, 2013). The mechanisms of throughput legitimacy that will be studied in this thesis are voice, transparency, and due deliberation (Edelenbos, van Meerkerk, & Klijn 2013:277). These aspects are used to measure the democratic quality of governance processes (Bekkers and Edwards, 2007; Dryzek, 2000; Edelenbos and Klijn, 2006; Edelenbos et al., 2010; Klijn, 2009; Scharpf, 1999 in Edelenbos, et al 2013:277). Voice refers to the amount of stakeholders and stakeholder influence. Transparency covers access to information and whether it is available and accessible for all stakeholders. Finally due deliberation is about the quality of argumentation and the opportunities to debate in the governance process. Additionally Hogg & Hains (1996) maintain that the permeability of boundaries affect the legitimacy as well, indicating a positive relationship between permeability and legitimacy.

2.4 Attractiveness

Attraction or attractiveness is a concept that is used in different fields of study, this thesis will be based on the social exchange theory. In this theory the focus lies on the relational aspect, so in this case the relationship between stakeholders and the network and stakeholders in the network. Harris, O'Malley & Patterson, (2003:12) describe attractiveness as “perceived past, current, future or potential partners as appealing in terms of their ability to provide superior benefits, access to important resources and social compatibility”. The concept of attraction can be explained by three major components: “Perceived expected value [from being associated with the network], perceived trust [in the network], and perceived dependency [on the network]” (Hald, Cordón & Vollmann, 2009:962 in: Mortensen 2012). They study attractiveness from the angle of business relations claiming that: “the force fostering voluntarism in purchasing and marketing exchange, and further pushing a buyer and supplier closer together in a mutually advantageous relationship” (p968). If this is translated into stakeholder to network relationship, attractiveness can be seen as a positive experienced force to start an exchange with the network in a mutually advantageous relationship. Wilkinson, Young & Freytag (2005) add an important aspect to the concept of attractiveness, they claim it is perceived by individuals, and it is most likely to occur when “similar background, morals, styles of working, codes of conduct, complementary skills, and reputations are shared” (Wilkinson et al 2005, in: Mortensen et al: 2012:1208).

Next to that, attractors, which stem from complexity literature, will be used to examine the attractiveness of the networks. Attractor is a concept borrowed from Luhmann's communications theory in which he differentiates between language, topics, and persons as possible virtual attractors. According to DeLanda (2002, in Farías, 2014) attractors can be seen as "singularities that orientate the operation of a system". However in this thesis, attractors are the least significant aspect of attractiveness because it is expected that they will not be influenced by boundary spanning. The attractors are taken into account solely to get a complete insight in what makes a network attractive.

2.4.1 Trust

Another factor that defines a network's attractiveness is trust. Trust seems to play an important role in governance networks for the reason that there generally are no hierarchical power structures, and generally no official contracts are signed between the actors. Besides that trust reduces risk because of a bigger predictability of network partners' behavior (Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014). Moreover, it increases the probability that the engaged actors invest means like knowledge and money in the cooperation. Finally, trust can stimulate innovation since different ideas and expertise are brought together (Klijn, Edelenbos & Steijn, 2010, Van Meerkerk & Edelenbos, 2014).

Trust can be defined as a positive expectation that actor A has of the intentions and motivation of actor B with respect to abstaining from opportunistic behavior even when an opportunity occurs, and that the actors take each other's interest in account and live up to their promised actions (Klijn, Edelenbos and Steijn, 2010:195-196). Lewicki and Bunkers (1996) argue that trust development in collaborations consist of three stages:

1. Calculus based trust
2. Knowledge based trust
3. Identification based trust

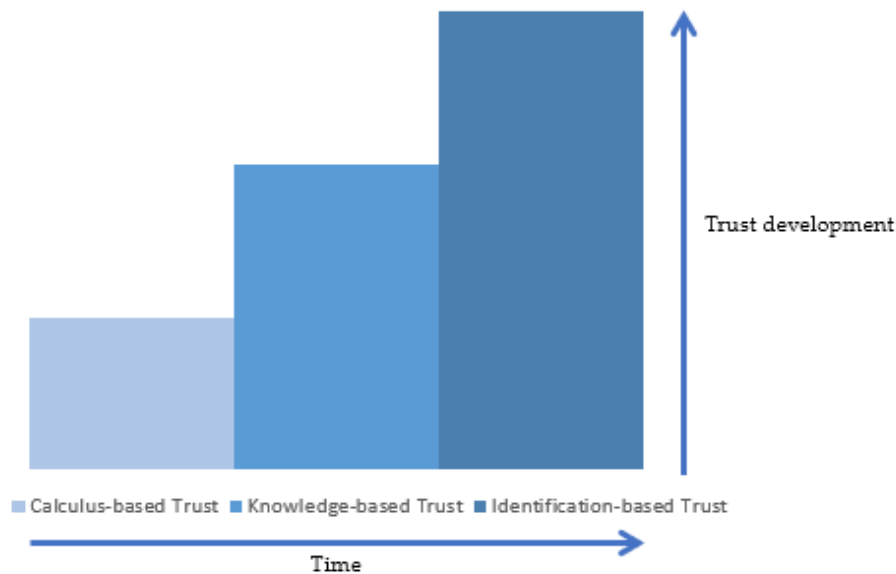


Figure 2. Stages of Trust (Lewicki, 1996:124)

They explain calculus based trust as weighing the costs and benefits of the relationship. Secondly, in the stage of knowledge based trust emphasis lies on information, it is based on the predictability of the other's behavior. This level of trust usually requires a longer period of time to build up and is based on former (positive) experiences. Finally, identification based trust occurs when both actors share the same interest, choices and preferences. Both actors mutually understand each other's expectations and intentions and they can sure that their interests are looked after by the other. These three stages are fluent, and it is possible that actors do not find themselves in just one stage.

2.5 Boundary spanning in relation to network legitimacy and attractiveness

The extensive theories and studies on network management has proven the significance of boundary spanning and interaction between actors. However, network management is generally investigated in relation to performance of the network. There seems to be little research on its influence on legitimacy. In order to fill up this Gap van Meerkerk (2014) addressed boundary spanning in relation to democratic legitimacy in his article. His main findings conclude that the quality of the decision-making processes defines the throughput legitimacy, and that therefore boundary spanners are important for bringing actors together and steering and enabling interactions within networks (Koppenjan and Klein, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009 in: van meerkerk, 2014). While looking at the role of the network manager he

found a strong effect of boundary spanning management on throughput legitimacy. Moreover, the results show that “throughput legitimacy has a partially mediating role in the relationship between connective management and network performance” (p91).

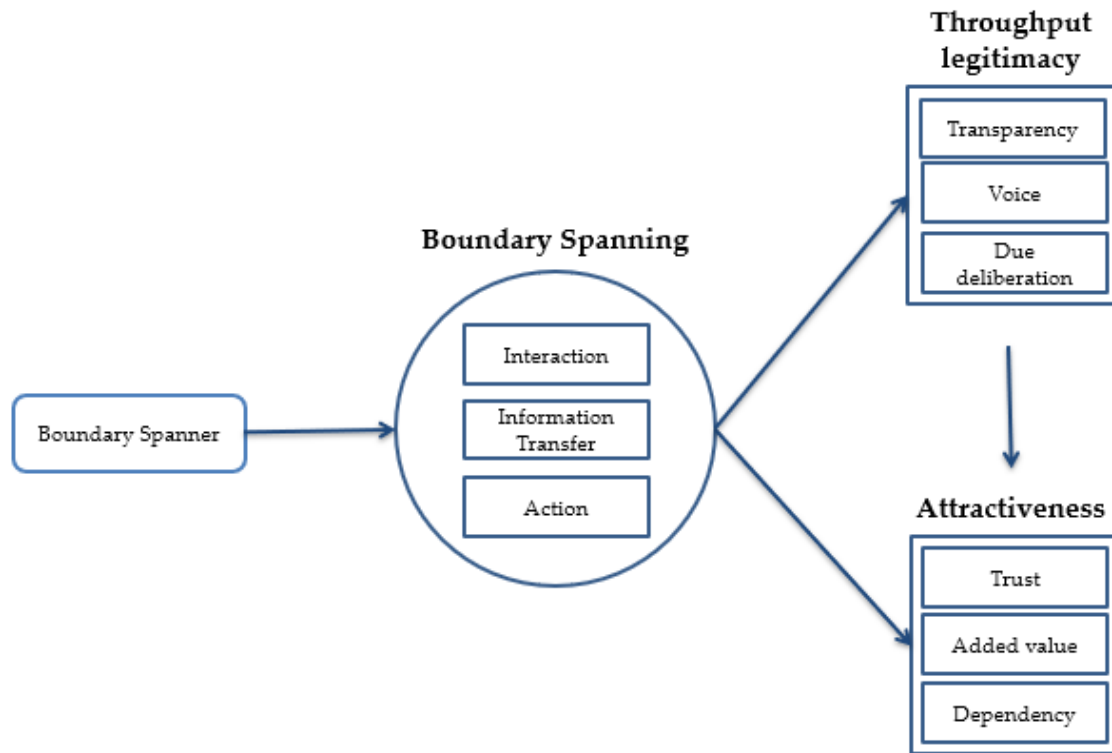
Up until now, there seems to be a gap in the literature on the influence of boundary spanning activities on attractiveness. However Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2014) investigated trust in complex urban governance networks. They encountered a strong positive relation between the presence of boundary spanning and trust between the network partners. This relation can be explained by the connecting activities carried out by boundary spanners. The results show that connecting persons and processes within and outside the network were seen as their most important activity. Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2015) explain that boundary spanners are aware of the needs and interest of the actors and therefore are able to create shared frames and connect the actors. According to Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) this causes actors to expect advantages in future cooperation leading to an increase in trust.

2.6 Conceptual Model

Because membership of the GPM and VNG is voluntary the network should be attractive to maintain and attract members, but also its legitimacy is important for survival. This research addresses the relationship between boundary spanning on the one hand, and throughput legitimacy and attractiveness on the other hand. The boundary spanner and boundary spanning are considered the independent variables, while legitimacy and attractiveness constitute the dependent variables. The aim of this research is to learn more about the possible influence of boundary spanning on attractiveness and legitimacy. We look at this relationship, because if there is a positive relationship present, this type of management could be improved in order to increase a network's attractiveness and legitimacy. Furthermore, this thesis investigates whether there is a mutual link between legitimacy and attractiveness and if there are boundary spanning activities that increase both dependent variables.

These relationships are studied in the context of both GPM and VNG to gain knowledge about this subject in different networks, but also to see if the networks can learn from each other. At the moment of this research the GPM aimed at increasing their membership and one way to do that is to become more attractive and more legitimate. The VNG will serve as an example, because of its large membership base and its influence on Dutch

governance. If this research provides evidence for this positive relationship, recommendations about changing the network management can be given in order to increase its attractiveness and legitimacy. Accordingly, the following conceptual model is composed:



The theoretical framework and conceptual model can be deduced into the following expectations:

1. *Network members that are part of a committee and secretariat employees are expected to be the main boundary spanners, and experience the highest boundary permeability.*

Networks participants often desire shared self-governance, so that they can have control over the direction of the network. The geographical spread of members complicates this, because it makes frequent meeting complicated. Provan and Kenis (2008) propose to centralize the governance activities around broker organizations. The GPM and VNG demonstrate this centralization of governance activities around the board, committees and the secretariat. The literature study describes the boundary spanning role as interacting, information sharing, and streamlining, mobilizing, and innovating. It is expected that these activities are most prevalent in the secretariat and the committees, therefore committee members and secretariat employees are expected to be the main boundary spanners

2. *Presence of more boundary spanning leads to a higher level of legitimacy, under the condition that it is experienced as useful by the actors in the network.*

2a. *Boundary spanning activities interaction and information transfer are most significant for throughput legitimacy*

Legitimacy refers to the acceptance of the way in which the decision-making process happens. Hereby, matters like transparency voice and deliberation play an important role. The rise of new forms of governance like governance networks face the challenge of legitimacy. To learn more about legitimacy in networks and how to improve that in a complex environment, this thesis looks at how boundary spanning, which is deemed as an appropriate complexity management form, is related to legitimacy. Van Meerkerk (2014) addressed boundary spanning in relation to legitimacy and found that the quality of decision-making processes define throughput legitimacy. Networks consist of different actors that have different interests and expectations but also make use of different practices in their own decision making process. therefore boundary spanners are important for bringing actors together and steering and enabling interactions within networks (Koppenjan and Klein, 2004; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009 in: van meerkerk, 2014). Furthermore information transfer is expected to play a large role in maintaining transparency. Thus in short, boundary spanning, especially the activities that fall under interaction and information transfer, is expected to positively influence legitimacy.

3. *Presence of more boundary spanning will lead to a higher level of attractiveness, under the condition that it is experienced as useful by the actors in the network.*

3a. *Presence of boundary spanning leads to a higher level of trust*

Attractiveness refers to the reason to join the network and the benefits of the membership. Trust, added value, and dependency are the main determining aspects of attractiveness in this study. The literature seemed to only have discussed the relationship between boundary spanning and expected advantages and trust. Koppenjan and Klijn (2004) demonstrated that the creation of shared interest and frames, and connecting actors resulted in actors expecting some advantage from cooperation in the network which leads to increased trust. Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2015) also found a positive relationship between the presence of boundary spanning and trust between the network partners, they considered connecting persons and processes within and outside the network as the activity. In addition to that, trust development is based on interaction and positive experiences. Therefore, the role of boundary spanners in

linking actors in the network and the maintaining positive relationships are expected to positively influence trust. Therefore it is expected that in GPM and VNG boundary spanning positively influences attractiveness, and especially trust.

4. Legitimacy has a moderating effect on attractiveness

Legitimacy and attractiveness both constitute the dependent variables in this research, however they are not two isolated variables. This thesis does not only look at the relationship between the independent and dependent variables but also studies the link between legitimacy and attractiveness. Legitimacy is often perceived as an element to maintain the viability and status of an organization. Since membership of network is on a voluntary basis, it requires legitimate processes in order to attract and maintain members. Therefore it is expected that perceptions of high legitimacy increase the attractiveness, and in particular trust.

3. Methodology

The research process consists of several steps, which are described in this chapter. First the research strategy and research methods are deliberated on. Followed by a short explanation of the choice of cases and the corresponding stake holders. Subsequently the main variables will be operationalized and the data analysis is explained. Finally the reliability and validity of this research are discussed.

3.1 Research design

Qualitative research provides in-depth knowledge on perspectives and opinions of the persons involved. Furthermore it allows for studying phenomena in their context (Burns, 2000). A qualitative design was selected because of the subject of study and the availability of respondents. The subject of study is perceived attractiveness and legitimacy, whereby the focus lies on gaining insights in the perceptions and opinions of the actors in the network. In addition, the GPM consisted of 18 members at the moment that this research was conducted. Thus the GPM did not provide sufficient respondents to conduct a quantitative research.

Bryman (2008:366) argues that qualitative research is an inductive way of researching because it works from research to theory. For this thesis this is partly true, the research starts in a deductive manner because we cannot ignore the large amount of literature on attractiveness, trust, boundary spanning and legitimacy that already exists. Thus on the basis of existing literature the variables and, where possible, links between are described and hypothesized. Followed by the inductive part of the research which covers the relationship between the variables. To carry out this research both networks were narrowed down by setting boundaries. The cases are delineated by drawing boundaries between the network and its members, and the environment of the network. In other words, solely the actors within the network are part of this study. Only their perspectives, opinions and roles are studied. By setting these borders the case is kept compact which enables an in-depth study.

3.3 Sample strategy

The respondents were selected by means of purposive sampling. The sample consists of 18 respondents, and is comprised of 4 types of actors: secretariat employees, mayors, alderman and city hall employees. The researcher intended to create a diverse sample by selecting persons with different functions, but also with different levels of involvement. Table 1 shows

the characteristics of the sample. Purposive sampling was used to select diverse respondents, in order to get a holistic understanding of both networks, since all kinds of actors were being included.

	GPM N=9	Respondent nr	VNG N=9	Respondent nr
Mayor	33% (3)	15, 17, 18	56% (5)	1, 3, 6, 8, 9
Alderman	0		22% (2)	2, 5
Secretariat	33% (3)	10, 13, 14	11% (1)	7
City hall employee	33% (3)	11, 12, 16	11% (1)	4

Table 1. Respondents sample

3.4 Data collection

First, I made use of source triangulation consisting of interviews and questionnaires, documents and observations in order to obtain an integrated understanding. The reason for choosing interviews as research methods lies in the fact that it provides insights in the perspectives and opinions of the involved persons. Semi-structured interviews were conducted providing the possibility to ask the participants more in-depth follow up questions. In order to examine the role of the boundary spanner in the networks and possible relations between the variables, the interview questions were organized into 4 groups of questions, corresponding to the variables.

Next to interviews, a document analysis was carried out which mostly provided useful insights in the governance structure and goals and concerted action of both networks. Additionally a questionnaire was filled out by 4 mayors due to distance and time constraints. This questionnaire consisted of similar questions as the interviews with some additional questions that would otherwise be asked by the interviewer as in depth questions.

3.5 Case selection

This research on the role of boundary spanners in a network takes place in two contexts: the GPM and the VNG. These two network show some similarities, but also some differences. Both networks focus on local governance and have a similar internal governance structures. Although it must be noted that the GPM is a smaller organization with a simpler governance structure. With regard to the governance structures, both networks aim at cooperation instead of horizontal lines.

This research was carried out in order to develop recommendations principally for the GPM. The VNG was selected as second case in this comparative research because VNG exists for 100 years already. Furthermore it is a large and network that can account for all Dutch municipalities as it members. This powerful network also plays an important role in the local and national governments in the Netherlands. Whereas the GPM is a relatively new network, formally established in 2017. It is currently working on the extension of its membership base. Because of the abovementioned similarities, and the aligning aim of the GPM to also to have a large membership and become an influential network, the VNG was selected as the second case in this thesis. Since the GPM is still at a developmental stage, it was interesting to see how the VNG is handling the complexity that accompanies governance networks.

3.6 Operationalization variables

In this section the theory based variables from the conceptual model are operationalized in to practical concepts. The operationalization of the theoretical concepts makes that this research can be carried out systematically. Table 2 presents a schematic overview of the theoretical framework and its operationalization. The variables consist of several dimensions, whereby the topics give a general description of the dimension. The topics were translated into practical indicators which are contextual relevant examples which enable the recognition of the variables in the empirical context. The operationalization scheme below forms a structured guideline for the interview questions.

variable	dimensions	topics	indicators
Boundary spanning	Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting and linking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding partners and build useful and sustainable relationships Maintain relationships Variety of interactions
	Information transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting information translating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select relevant info (how) is info shared with partner Information perceived as relevant
	action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulating actors to actively participate in network activities/processes Mobilize other parties after change events

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline Innovating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish agreement between actors Negotiate goals Develop a joint agenda find new partnership come up with innovative solutions
Throughput Legitimacy ¹	transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization of information Transparency of decision-making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear information information is accessible clear set up decision making processes public display of the decisions and argumentation and decision-making points
	voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Width participation Access to project participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big numbers of participants Big variety of participants Open for new participants Easy access to participate
	Due deliberation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for debate Quality of argumentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presence of debates Possibility to start debates Other actors are open for debate the results of debate lead to change
	Boundary permeability	Crossing boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperation with other actors within the network Cooperation with actors from outside the network
Attractiveness ²	Perceived trust in the network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> calculus based trust knowledge based trust identification based trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs benefits Prior experiences Shared interests, values
	Perceived expected value" from being associated with the network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network alignment provides superior benefit Access to important resources
	Perceived dependency on the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dependency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> network necessary to accomplish goals
	Presence of Attractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social compatibility Shared language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correspondence of process with value structures of society Shared frames, shared views on topics

¹ Edelenbos, van Meerkerk & Klijn (2013).

² Mortensen (2012)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persons as attractors ▪ Topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Persons that serve as an example ▪ Big names in the field
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interesting themes/topics

Table 2. Operationalization scheme

3.7 Analysis

As mentioned before, in this research different data sources are used. First an extensive literature study was carried out in order to answer the theoretical sub questions, to gather knowledge on the studied variables in order to form the operationalization framework that forms the base of the questionnaire and interview questions. Moreover, to examine what has been written already about the studied correlations. Finally a document study and data collection through interviews and a questionnaire were carried out.

3.7.1 Documents

Studying the documents mainly provided insights in the governance structure of both networks. Furthermore it helped in determining the borders of and within both cases. Finally they provided information about the stakeholders and their role in the networks. The documents consists of publicly accessible documents on the websites of both website, an already existing report on the governance efficiency of the VNG, but also inside documents with reactions to for example new bills or rules.

3.7.2 Data

The data analysis consists of multiple coding stages, first deductive and then inductive. A coding scheme which has been based on the literature and operationalization of the variables forms the basis for the first coding stage: selective coding. In this stage the analysis of interviews was based on the pre-set codes to form an impression of the variables and topics in the dataset. Afterwards, thematic coding was carried out. Thematic coding is a more open way of coding and allows for exposing new indicators that were not defined in the coding scheme. The conceptual model presents several causal relationships between boundary spanning, and legitimacy and attractiveness. These relations were revealed by means of axial coding, which made it possible to discover patterns, and with that, the relationships between the variable were unveiled.

3.8 Validity and reliability

Qualitative methods face some criticism regarding reliability and validity. Namely, that data is obtained in a single context, as well as the possibility of the researcher's bias in interpreting the data. Therefore, it is necessary to guarantee the reliability and validity.

3.8.1 Reliability

A research is reliable when it is repeatable producing the same results. Reliability is about the accuracy and consistency of the measurements (van Thiel, 2010). Verschuren and Doorewaard (2007) claim that the reliability can be increased if the research is conducted in a transparent way and when it is possible to repeat it. To achieve transparency, the coding scheme provides insight in the theories that form the basis of the interview questions and in how the data was analyzed. As mentioned earlier, the researcher's bias is seen as criticism on qualitative methods. Therefore the interviews are recorded and transcribed, because it enables the researchers to check for biases and change their behavior if necessary.

3.8.2 Validity

Validity of a research can be divided in internal and external validity. Internal validity assures that the researcher measures what he or she ought to measure. The external validity is based on the possibility of generalization. In other words, can the results of this research be applied to other time frames situations, organization or countries (van Thiel, 2010).

The internal validity of this research is high because of the construction of a coding scheme beforehand. The interview consists of semi-structured questions which are formulated on the basis of the coding scheme. The external validity of this research is considerably lower to the fact that this thesis concerns a double context study. However, this the most appropriate research method for this research question causing an inevitable low external validity.

4. Case Description

This chapter will first present a case description of the GPM and VNG in order to provide the necessary background information. Finally, the link between legitimacy and attractiveness will be discussed. To define the context of this research the following network characteristics will be taken in to account:

- Governance structure
- Internal stakeholders
- Boundaries
- Common goals
- Concerted action

Both GPM and VNG deal with a lot of internal and external stakeholders. To reduce the scope of this research to a manageable size, there has been opted for solely studying the perceptions of the internal stakeholders since they are most interesting for this subject of study. Based on the initial selective coding, table 3, 4, 5 and 6 below present a schematic overview of the interview results, that together with the results from open coding will form the basis for the discussion on the respondents' perceptions of the legitimacy and attractiveness. Subsequently, the differences between the networks will be explained

4.1 Global Parliament of Mayors

The GPM consists of a heterogeneous membership base that is supported by a Secretariat. Furthermore the network is characterized by its horizontal and non-hierarchal character and its autonomous members of by city leaders from all over the world. The network came into existence because of the idea that working together is better in order to serve mutual interests. This network is based on the book 'If mayors ruled the world' by Benjamin Barber. The main thought can be summarized as that local officials are better suit to deal with global issues together from a bottom-up approach. Therefore local leaders should cooperate together to strengthen the local voice. The GPM was established as a legal association in 2017, since then the focus has been mainly on increasing the membership base, currently the common goals and concerted action are being outlined.

4.1.1 Governance structure

The GPM has a simple governance structure, consisting of the general meeting, the Executive Committee, the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat. The latter two solely have a supporting position. The Advisory committee consists of international renowned experts, and will not be included in this research. All GPM members form the general meeting and take part in the decision-making on the direction of the network. The executive Committee consists of eight mayors that take part in everyday, more specialized decision-making. Figure 4. shows the organogram of the GPM.

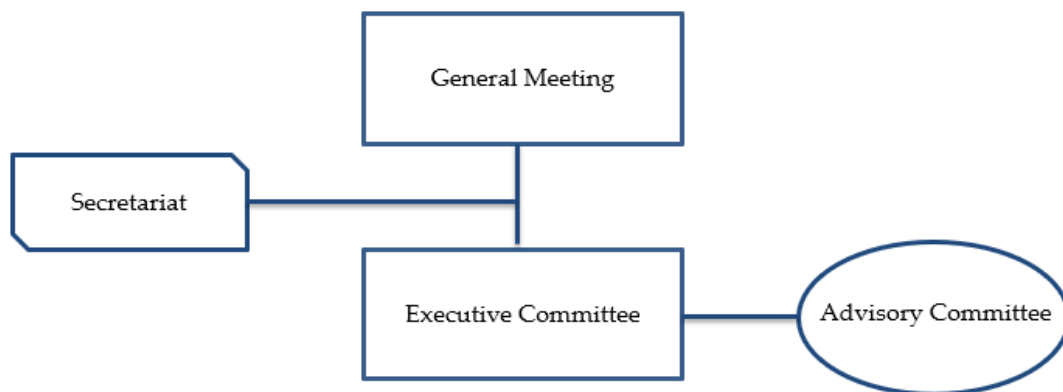


Figure 3. Organogram GPM

4.1.2 Internal stakeholders

The main stakeholder groups within the GPM are: the mayors who are member of the GPM, the mayor staffers that assist the mayors their work for and contact with the GPM and the Secretariat employees. In addition, the experts who form the Advisory Committee, and the networks that are aligned to the GPM can be considered as groups of stakeholders. The last two are not taken into account in this research because they are no official members of the GPM. Hence the studied stakeholders in the present study will consist of the mayors, their municipal officers that support with GPM matters, and the secretariat employees. There are different layers of interaction visible in the network. First that of the official members which are the mayors. Furthermore there is a layer of the secretariat and the city hall officials that participate in the background and mainly have a supporting function.

4.1.3 Boundaries

As mentioned above, the main stakeholders of the GPM are mayors of cities from all over the world. As logical consequence the most apparent boundary is the geographic boundary. For

boundary spanners it is important to cross these geographic boundaries, which because of modern technology, are not that big of an obstacle anymore. However, the developing countries do not always have the same resources as other countries making it more difficult to communicate but also more difficult to travel and meet with other members. The cultural differences that accompany the different geographic locations are considered the demographic boundaries. The members are mayors from all over the world with a different cultural, political, and language background, and they need to cross these demographic boundaries in order to cooperate together.

The third boundary that the stakeholders will encounter are the vertical boundaries. Mayors, staffers, the Secretariat all work together on this project and have different positions in the hierarchy and might encounter power distances between certain stakeholders. The horizontal boundaries apply to the for example the different functions in the network like experts, mayors and other organizations. Finally stakeholder boundaries, cover the boundaries between the different municipalities within the GPM. These boundaries are considered the internal boundaries. Regarding the external boundaries, the GPM aims to become a network of networks. To connect all the different international networks. Therefore the external boundaries of the GPM are those between the GPM and other networks. But also the boundaries with other municipalities that are not yet a member of the GPM and finally boundaries can be encountered between the GPM and national governments and governance organizations like the EU.

4.1.4 Common goals

The common goals of the GPM are determined on the Annual Summit. It starts with theoretical input from the Advisory Committee for the position papers and with that the final declaration. This is passed on to the Executive Committee and after their feedback and adjustments, the final declaration is presented to the general meeting. During the GPM Annual Summit, all members vote on the final declaration, and with that the common goals they decide to take action upon. The common goals that flown out of the 2018 summit focus on cooperation. Not only between city leaders but also cooperation with national governments and international organizations and networks. This goal is applied to the thematic contexts of health, migration, and urban security. These goals are subject to change over time due to the zeitgeist and path

dependency. Furthermore the GPM aims for joint advocacy of its members. To strengthen the voice of local government, to if necessary, stand up together.

4.1.5 Concerted action

This research has been conducted in the time that the GPM was establishing its common goals. Which have established during the Annual Summit 2018 and accordingly published in the 2018 declaration. Subsequently mayors have to decide on which concerted actions they will take on the set common goals. This happens outside the time frame of this research and therefore cannot be further elaborated on.

4.2 Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten

The VNG was inaugurated in 1912 based on the idea of a network that looks after the interest of all Dutch municipalities and enables joint purchase of coal. It exists for more than 100 years, and has a big membership base, namely all Dutch municipalities. Also, this network has a strong voice in the Dutch local and national governance. The VNG has an autonomous membership base without a hierarchical structure, and its members do encounter some resource interdependencies. VNG fulfills the roles of lobby representative, and provides policy development and execution. But according to Deetman (2017) these roles increasingly became interlaced which resulted in loss of self-awareness and definition. With that, the increase of projects and its financing makes that VNG is viewed as the execution counter of the national government.

4.2.1 Governance structure

Four years ago Committee Brok advised to strengthen the administrative organization and increase the involvement of members. Therefore, the last years the VNG moved towards a more flexible network organization (Deetman, 2017). The governance structure of the VNG consists of the board of directors, the board, several committees and provincial departments, and the general assembly. The provincial departments are the eyes and ears of the association, while the board and committees are responsible for the decision-making. Deetman (2017) examined the governance structure of the VNG and concluded that its structure should be more horizontal based on mutual cooperation, instead of vertical lines. Figure 5 shows the organogram of the VNG

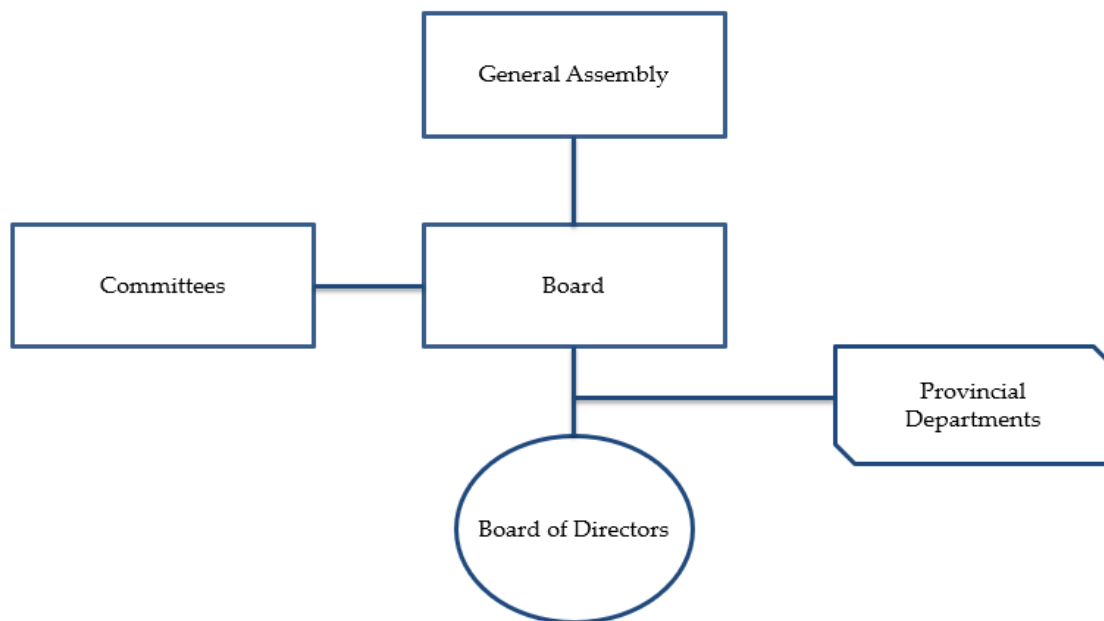


Figure 4. Organogram VNG

4.2.2 Internal stakeholders

The VNG does not only consist of different groups of stakeholders but also of different layers. It is the association of municipal directors and councilors of municipalities. The membership base of the VNG is diverse in the sense that committees are formed by mayors, aldermen, city managers, members of the council, and council clerks. However there are substantial differences between the (starting) positions and roles of directors and councilors, and also between the conditions under which they can carry out their job. Next to the committees, the VNG consists of several sub municipal and city networks that have their sub interests as well.

4.2.3 Boundaries

Whereas the geographical border is one of main challenges within the GPM, this seems to be less of a challenge within the VNG. Respondent VNG 1 indicated that living in the same country, with the same culture and same political environment is the biggest difference in comparison to a supraational network. All the actors are bound by the same political environment. The most apparent boundaries in the VNG seem to be the vertical and the stakeholder boundaries. The VNG consists of 300 municipalities that differ in size, and therefore have different levels of influence on decision making. The different municipalities and in the VNG constitute to the stakeholder boundaries. The horizontal boundaries apply to the boundaries of the committees and sub networks.

It is mentioned that stakeholders in general are easy to reach by phone, but that in the end the stakeholders stick to their own committee if they are active, or only contact a certain committee if they are dealing with their theme. It seems like it is difficult to connect the committees and all stakeholders in general due to the enormous size of the VNG. In addition, the great amount of varying municipalities makes it harder to connect the different goals and agenda points.

4.2.4 Common goals

The common goal consist of strategic common goals, but also policy content and specific implementation objectives. The 2018 joint policy agenda focused on the following goals: climate and energy, construction and mobility in urban areas, speeding up the transformation of the social domain, strong local democracy, and digitization. Next to the policy related goals, the VNG also aims to work at its efficiency, customer service, and flexibility (VNG, 2018:15).

4.2.5 Concerted action

The activities of the VNG can be divided in to lobbying and providing services. The lobby focuses on looking after the collective interest of its members, while providing services is more focused on its individual members, which contains reporting recommendations, accounting activities and regulations models.

In order to deal with the abovementioned policy and implementation goals the VNG proposes the next actions:

- Strengthen the autonomy of municipalities and make custom made approaches possible, especially by means of organizing more intensively together on generic themes;
- Join scarce knowledge and utilize networks such as umbrella organizations, partnerships, and knowledge networks;
- Work as one active branch of municipalities together with chain partners and the national government, in order to optimize services to residents and entrepreneurs;
- Achieve efficiency benefits, for example through economies of scale in stock acquisition and control (VNG, 2018:15)

4.3 Legitimacy and attractiveness in governance networks

The legitimacy of the process of decision making and is subject to the perceptions of the members in the network. Characteristics of a legitimate process are transparency, voice, and due deliberation. Attractiveness consists of the characteristics: trust, perceived added value from being associated with the network, dependency, and attractors. Whereas the first three apply to the attractiveness for its members in the sense of why to stay a member, attractors define the reasons why to become a member. The following sections will elaborate on the perceptions of members on the legitimacy and what makes the network attractive. The final section will discuss the results of both networks and provide an explanation of the differences.

4.3.1 Legitimacy and attractiveness of the GPM

With the establishment of the GPM, statutes have been developed that protect the legal legitimacy of the association. Respondents 11 and 13 highlighted this form of legitimacy, which has been increased because it has been broadly shared with members and future members. But looking at the perceived legitimacy of the information and decision making processes, the opinions are slightly divided. Table 3 and 4 present a schematic overview of the selective codes that were present in the GPM data.

Legitimacy	GPM
2.1 Transparency	
2.1.1 clear information	3+ 5 O 1-
2.1.2 information is accessible	6+ 3 O 0-
2.1.3 transparent decision making processes	7+ 2 O 0-
2.1.4 public display of decision-making points and decisions	0+ 8 O 1-
2.2 Voice	
2.2.1 big number of participants	0+ 7 O 2-
2.2.2 big variety of participants	2+ 6 O 1-
2.2.3 open to new participants	2+ 7 O 0-
2.2.4 easy access to participate	5+ 4 O 0-
2.3 Due deliberation	
2.3.1 presence of debates	1+ 3 O 2-
2.3.2 possibility to start debates	5+ 4 O 0-
2.3.3 results of debate lead to change	2+ 6 O 1-
2.4 Boundary permeability	
2.4.1 cooperation with other actors/commissions in network	6+ 3 O 0-
2.4.2 cooperation with actors from outside the network	6+ 3 O 0-

Table 3. Selective codes legitimacy GPM

In general the decision making process is perceived as very transparent (N=6, respondents 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17), especially with regard to the accessibility of information and the transparent decision making processes. Respondent 16 stated that *“they are always very open about their decisions. It is transparent, we have good access I think. Very available, if I request documents I can always get access.”* Respondent 17 and 18 affirm this easy access to information. Another example of transparency in the GPM is that *the decisions made by the Daily Board and the Executive are reported via the Virtual platform* (respondents 10, 11, 13, 17). However, respondents 13 and 14 expressed that there is room for improving information sharing concerning the decision making process so that it happens in a more transparent way.

The current status of the membership base has consequences for the voice within the network, which is portrayed by the small width of participation (respondent 11, 14). Even though the network is very open to new participants, but also existing members are invited and stimulated to participate actively in the network (respondents 14, 16, 17) the number of actors and the participation width remains low. It is claimed that *actors could communicate and participate more* (respondents 13, 16). *Members have the opportunity to propose new ideas, and projects and wove into the decision making process, as well as provide suggestions for the joint agenda in preparation of the general meeting* (respondents 11, 12, 13).

With regard to the due deliberation, the GPM has been working on the opportunity for debates (N=5) with the development of the exclusive Virtual Platform. This platform enables document sharing, having online conversations and creating consultations. *Every member is present at this platform and thus has the opportunity to start a discussion or debate* (respondent 10, 11, 15). Next to the Virtual Platform, the Annual Summit is one of the main events where the actors have the opportunity to have debates and discussion. *“It feels like you can put something interesting out there and there is platform for it to be heard”* (respondent 12). The respondents describe the quality of the debate differently. Actors have

“access to experts, academics, they have the knowledge so that’s good. It is also good to get the less academic perspective of the city representatives, the representative, the mayors themselves. Which might not always be as educated as the experts. So then quality thereof is quite good.” (Respondent 16)

The debates are well organized and the quality is of international standard (respondent 17). However not everyone agrees with this. The majority of comments is about the *lack of initiation*

of debates and discussions (11, 12, 14), and that the direction of the GPM should be discussed more and should be clearly defined (respondents 15 and 18).

As concerns the attractiveness, the interview results show that the perceived added value is what makes the GPM most attractive (n=7). The trust framework used in this research consists of three stages of trust development. The majority of the GPM actors seems to find themselves in the calculus-based or knowledge-based stage of trust development (n=6). Furthermore respondents (N=8) indicated that *they were not dependent on the GPM for resources, knowledge or to achieve their goals*. Finally, the fact that it is a *mayors only network focused on city leadership* and thus share the same frames and goals, is what makes the GPM attractive (N=6, respondents 12, 13, 14, 16, 17,18). Table 4 presents a schematic overview of the selective codes that were present in the GPM data.

Attractiveness	GPM		
3.1 Trust			
3.1.2 cost benefits to define trust	6+	3 O	0-
3.1.3 prior experiences define trust	5+	4 O	0-
3.1.4 shared interests, values, choices	1+	8 O	0-
3.2 expected value from being associated with network			
3.2.1 network alignment provides superior benefits	6+	2 O	0-
3.2.2 access to resources and knowledge	7+	2 O	0-
3.3 Dependency			
3.3.1 network necessary to accomplish goals	2+	6 O	1-
3.3.2 dependent on network	1+	1 O	7-
3.4 attractors			
3.4.1 correspondence processes with value structures of society	1+	8 O	0-
3.4.2 shared frames, views on topics	6+	2 O	0-
3.4.3 persons that serve as examples	3+	6 O	0-
3.4.4 big names	0+	9 O	0-
3.4.5 interesting themes/topics	5+	4 O	0-

Table 4. Selective codes attractiveness GPM

GPM members explain the added value as being part of a network that enables easy access to a large and diverse portfolio of mayors (respondents 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18), but also to other networks and experts (respondent 10, 11, 16). The mayor feels like “he can pick up the phone to other members, to offer or ask for support” (respondent 12). Respondent emphasizes the importance of connecting by saying: “one of our colleagues needed that connection. Without that it is quiet hard to get in touch with other cities. So you know cities and officers and mayors never respond. You need a direct connection, it is so much easier”. Besides that, access to resources and knowledge

was also considered as added value. The GPM enables *knowledge and best practice exchange of the themes like urban security which are useful to a city* (respondents 13, 14, 18). The GPM Annual summit has been a good opportunity for personal contact, where cities, best practices can be discussed, and where mutual cooperation could be agreed upon (respondent 14). A practical example of resources is a city's cooperation with the Talent Cities Program (respondent 17) which provides solutions for talent gaps in cities .

Respondents 15 and 17 indicated to be solely in the calculus based stage of trust development. GPM membership involves a membership fee, yearly to be paid by each city depending on their population size and GDP. *The trust in the membership seems often to be a trade-off between the costs of the membership fees, and what it delivers to the city.* Mayors have to justify the membership's value towards their city council and citizens (respondents 12, 14, 15, 16, 17). Also actors do not know precisely what to expect of each other because of lack of previous experiences (respondent 13).

Next to that, trust defines attractiveness. Respondents 11, 12, 14, 16 find themselves in the knowledge based stage. The base their trust in the network and the value of their membership on *all the good work that has been done over the past* (respondent 11), *or regular meetings with other actors in the network and how the actors participate in the network* (respondents 12, 14, 16) Except for respondent 11, the others do not only look at previous experiences but also make a tradeoff between cost and benefits. In this research, respondent 12 is the only respondent that indicated the presence of highest stage of trust: identification based trust. There is *“that trust based around Benjamin barber. So people feel that if there is a connection with him then there is a kind of implicit trust that everyone is working for his legacy”*.

4.3.2 Legitimacy and attractiveness of the VNG

The VNG has statutes that guarantee the “legal legitimacy” which are acknowledged by its members. But they do not seem to define how the legitimacy of the process is perceived by the members. The results show that in general VNG scores higher on throughput legitimacy than GPM. Its legitimacy is principally based on the large width of participants, the debates and the transparency of the decision making. However the legitimacy has been perceived differently between the respondents. Table 5 and 6 present a schematic overview of the selective codes that were present in the VNG data.

Legitimacy	VNG		
2.1 Transparency			
2.1.1 clear information	1+	7 O	1-
2.1.2 information is accessible	5+	1 O	3-
2.1.3 transparent decision making processes	7+	2 O	0-
2.1.4 public display of decision-making points and decisions	3+	6 O	0-
2.2 Voice			
2.2.1 big number of participants	5+	3 O	1-
2.2.2 big variety of participants	5+	4 O	0-
2.2.3 open to new participants	1+	8 O	0-
2.2.4 easy access to participate	0+	7 O	2-
2.3 Due deliberation			
2.3.1 presence of debates	7+	2 O	0-
2.3.2 possibility to start debates	5+	2 O	2-
2.3.3 results of debate lead to change	2+	7 O	0-
2.4 Boundary permeability			
2.4.1 cooperation with other actors/commissions in network	7+	2 O	0-
2.4.2 cooperation with actors from outside the network	8+	1 O	0-

Table 5. Selective codes legitimacy VNG

Respondents 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 affirmed the transparency of the internal processes, they mentioned that *communication is open and clear* (respondent 1, 5) and *all the information can be found*. Either through the website or via contacting the VNG organization, although not all members are aware of this broad scope of the organization (respondent 7). Next to that, actors intended to not present any sudden new decisions or information without involving the members (respondent 1). Moreover, the transparency increased because representatives of sub networks participate in committees, and that participation is then later discussed in the sub bodies (respondent 5). Finally respondents 4 and 6 add to that, that it is especially the committee members who experience the information stream as more transparent because of their proximity to the decision making. In the meantime, *the speed of negotiations and decision making causes a feeling of less transparency. These speedy actions result in late receipt of decisions or documents* (respondent 3, 6), *which are sometimes picked up by the press and appearing in new items before the members were informed* (respondent 2).

In respect to the voice, the formal width of participation in the VNG is very large, because of its relative high number of members and high variety among its members. This large variety and number of actors was also acknowledged by the majority of the respondents (n=6). They perceived a strong tendency of inviting participants to actively participate in committees and decision making. *A lot of attention goes to putting together very diverse board and committees* (respondent 3, 5).). Nonetheless, the width of participants is not always

experienced as an advantage and can impact the engagement. The main critique is that it is a *big organization with so many members that it is difficult to service everyone's interest* (respondent 1), or that it is *difficult to start and have a debate on conference with more than 2500 people* (respondent 6). This explains the low scores on openness and the access to decision making.

Finally, the due deliberation is a hot topic within the VNG. The report by Deetman indicated a need for more horizontal lines with regard to information sharing and discussion of themes. The respondents seemed to have a diverging view on the deliberation in the VNG. It appeared that committee and board members experienced a lot of opportunities for debate (respondent 3, 5, 6, 9). They find themselves close to the decision making processes and argue that by means of *participating and advising from their role as committee member they have some kind of say in the VNG decision making* and thereby justifying the quality of argumentation within the board and committees. Not all respondents agreed on the opportunities to start a debate. According to some, *due to the large membership base and the high amount of conference participants it is difficult to start a debate* (N=2).

As concerns the attractiveness, the interview results 100% of the respondents mentioned that superior benefits of the membership makes the network attractive. Besides that the access to resources and knowledge is also what makes the VNG attractive (n=8). Another dimension of attractiveness is the dependency on the network. The data shows that half of the respondents experienced some kind of dependency on the network (n=5). Lastly, the results show that the majority of VNG respondents (N=8) obtained a second degree level of trust, namely based on prior experiences. Table 6 below presents a schematic overview of the selective codes on attractiveness in the VNG.

Attractiveness	VNG
3.1 Trust	
3.1.2 cost benefits to define trust	4+ 5 O 0-
3.1.3 prior experiences define trust	8+ 1 O 0-
3.1.4 shared interests, values, choices	0+ 9 O 0-
3.2 expected value from being associated with network	
3.2.1 network alignment provides superior benefits	9+ 0 O 0-
3.2.2 access to resources and knowledge	8+ 0 O 1-
3.3 Dependency	
3.3.1 network necessary to accomplish goals	5+ 3 O 1-
3.3.2 dependent on network	4+ 2 O 3-
3.4 attractors	
3.4.1 correspondence processes with value structures of society	1+ 8 O 0-
3.4.2 shared frames, views on topics	3+ 5 O 0-
3.4.3 persons that serve as examples	1+ 8 O 0-
3.4.4 big names	2+ 8 O 0-
3.4.5 interesting themes/topics	3+ 6 O 0-

Table 6. Selective codes attractiveness VNG

The biggest attraction factor of VNG seems to be the perceived added value of the membership. All respondents mentioned that being a member of the VNG provides superior benefits, and provides access to resources and knowledge. The VNG membership enables *interconnections between municipal officials, enabling municipalities to discuss mutual problems, interchange ideas and knowledge and find solutions* (respondents 1, 7, 8). But VNG provides its members also with *resources like the 'kindertelefoon'*³ (respondent 5), *joint telecom* (respondent 7) and *model regulations and knowledge like explanation of law implementations* (respondent 2, 3, 5, 7).

Being part of the advocacy for the joint interests of its members: the Dutch municipalities in the national government is also seen as a superior benefit (respondents 2,3 4, 8, 9). Respondent 4 confirms this by saying that *the network makes sure that the national government looks after the interests of municipalities*, to which respondent 2 mentions the *joint municipal influences on national policy as one of the superior benefits*. Respondent 6 summarizes this by saying that *working together increases the power on the local governments*. She says that *all Dutch municipalities being part of the VNG is one of the biggest attraction factors*.

Furthermore various respondents acknowledged their dependence on the VNG, although the opinions seemed to be divided when respondents were asked directly. When they were asked if they are dependent on the VNG to achieve certain goals, the majority did

³ A free Dutch phone service for children and youngsters until the age of 18 who are in need of a conversation

mention *membership is necessary for a fair division of municipal funding from the central government*. This is supported by the VNG website. Moreover, respondent 5 mentions that *working together in the network is more cost efficient, and allows for faster realization of joint goals* (respondent 4). Respondents 3, 6 claims *all municipalities are dependent on the VNG, because a municipality on its own does not negotiate with the central government, they need the VNG and other municipalities to form a front together*.

In this research trust in the network is regarded as a characteristic of attractiveness. The results indicate a knowledge based level of trust in the VNG and their network partners, thus the level of trust is relatively high. 8 out of 9 respondents indicated that their trust is defined by previous experiences. Some of them indicated that their trust in the VNG is increasing because *the organization carried out actions that turned out to be trustworthy*. Half of the participants still also look at the costs and benefits next to prior experiences (1, 3, 6, 7). They look at how VNG negotiates with the national government and what they get from that.

4.3.3 Explanation of legitimacy and attractiveness

This section looks at to what extent the GPM and the VNG differ from each other with regards to the legitimacy and attractiveness. It will give more insight in what causes these differences and how this what we can learn from this.

We can conclude that the VNG is perceived as more legitimate than the GPM. The difference is mostly caused by the higher level of voice and due deliberation in the VNG. The data of the present study indicated that the majority of the respondents consider the GPM and VNG as a transparent network. Network members claim that the information concerning the decision-making is accessible and transparent (GPM N=7, VNG N=7). However, some VNG respondents claim that they perceive the decision as less transparent due to the speed of decision making but also because they feel that information is not shared on time (N=3). In case of the GPM, the respondents indicated they were content with the transparent information streams.

The networks diverge more on the topics voice and due deliberation. The voice is relatively high in the VNG due to its great membership base and large amount of committees that consist of diverse actors. This leads to a diverse input in decision making. The due deliberation is also perceived as relatively high, especially within the committees and sub-

networks. The majority of the respondents experienced opportunities to start debates which are of good quality. While on the other hand, the GPM has a lower level of voice because of its smaller membership base. Yet, this membership base is diverse in the sense of size and location of the cities. Finally, the respondents indicated ample opportunity for starting a debate, however the presence of actual debates is limited. Moreover, the opinions on the quality of the debates are divided.

The VNG turns out to be more attractive to its members than the GPM. The VNG respondents indicated more added value, higher dependency and a higher stage of trust development. The previous findings show that the respondents from both networks indicated the perceived added value as most attractive characteristic of the network. However, what was perceived as added value differs. The GPM respondents emphasized the connection with large and diverse mayor portfolio which leads to knowledge and best practice exchange. Meanwhile VNG respondents were also focused on the being part of the advocacy, thus creating a strong and unified front towards the national government. Besides that, dependency is a significant aspect of the VNG's attractiveness. VNG respondents expressed their dependence on the joint advocacy for the division of the municipal fund and cost efficiency. On the contrary, the GPM scores very low with regard to dependency on the network. Finally, the stage of trust in the GPM network is relatively low compared to the VNG. The GPM respondents seem to find themselves in the first (N=2) and second stage (N=5) of trust development, whereas the vast majority of the VNG respondents (N=8) has reached the second stage. Therefore it can be concluded that the members of the VNG find themselves in a later stage of trust development than the GPM members, and therefore their level of trust is higher than that of GPM members.

There are several factors that are of influence on the legitimacy and attractiveness and with that explain the differences between both networks. First, the stage of the network can be a relevant factor. The GPM is at the initial stage and shows lower level of voice, due deliberation, and dependency. The stage of the network is closely related to time. Time is an important factor, both in the time in which the network is places as well as the time a network exists. Time is primarily related to the level of trust. The VNG has a longer history of success stories, and also members have more experiences on which they can base the trust than the VNG. Furthermore time plays a role in the growth of the membership base and in the development of dependencies. In addition, the frames actors use can be of influence. the

variation in VNG respondents' perspective on their dependency seemed to be caused by the frames they use. All respondents mentioned the importance of joint advocacy, but also the role of the VNG in the division of the municipal funds. The majority frames this as actual dependence, while the others indicate that they are not dependent on the VNG. Besides that, the membership base differs in the sense of function and geography, the actors can encounter cultural differences and path dependency can all influence cooperation and interests that might influence legitimacy and attractiveness.

Finally, there was a discrepancy between the goal, and the common actions of the GPM. Since it is an association that has recently been established, the GPM and its members have taken the first steps towards defining and achieving their goals. Over the past year, a declaration has been published, and several smaller collaborations within the GPM but also with outside actors have been established. This discrepancy could explain the low dependency and relatively high expected added value. The goals are related to the expected value, whereas the uncertainty of actions explains the low dependency. The VNG seems to have defined common goals and concerted action, which could be an explanatory factor for the higher levels of expected added value and dependency

The fact that networks consist of more horizontal lines and cooperation requires transcending the boundaries, causes that traditional forms of (hierarchical) management no longer suffice. Therefore this research leaves out these previously mentioned factors but instead will focus on boundary spanning as a form of network management. The legitimacy and attractiveness will be examined in the light of boundary spanning, in order to see if the prevalence of boundary spanning activities influences the legitimacy. But first boundary spanners and their activities will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

5. Analysis of the role of boundary spanning in legitimacy and attractiveness

This chapter consists of the analysis of the results and discusses the causal relations stemming from the conceptual model. But first it elaborates on the role of boundary spanning in the network. The expectations will be examined in the light of the results and based on that, confirmed or rejected.

5.1 role of the boundary spanner

This thesis maintains 3 dimensions of boundary spanning: Interaction, Information transfer, and action. Furthermore, the respondents are categorized as the following actors: mayors, aldermen, secretariat, and municipal officer. The boundary spanning activities will be elaborated on to eventually confirm or reject expectation 1:

E1. Network members that are part of a committee and secretariat employees are expected to be the main boundary spanners, and experience the highest boundary permeability.

Boundary spanning	GPM			VNG		
1.1 Interaction						
1.1.1 Finding partners and build useful and sustainable relationships	7+	2 O	0-	9+	0O	0 -
1.1.2 Maintain useful relationships	6 +	2 O	1-	7+	1 O	1-
1.1.3 Variety of interactions	3+	5 O	1-	4+	4 O	1-
1.1.4 Develop a joint agenda	3+	6 O	0-	7+	2 O	0-
1.2 Information transfer						
1.2.1 select relevant information	6+	3 O	0-	5+	4 O	0-
1.2.2 information shared	7+	1 O	2-	8+	1 O	0-
1.2.3 information experienced as relevant	4+	5 O	0-	5+	4 O	0-
1.3 Action						
1.3.1 Stimulating actors to actively participate in network	9+	0 O	0-	6+	3 O	0-
1.3.2 mobilize actors after change event	3+	6 O	0-	3+	6 O	0-
1.3.3 Negotiate common goals	4+	5 O	0-	7+	1 O	1-
1.3.4 establish agreements between actors	2+	7 O	0-	5+	4 O	0-
1.3.5 come up with innovative solutions	0+	9 O	0-	4+	5 O	0-

Table 7. Selective codes boundary spanning

The data shows that there is more boundary spanning present in the VNG than in GPM. The most striking difference can be found in the boundary spanning activity action. These findings show that more similar numbers of respondents witnessed the presence of boundary spanning activities that are categorized as interaction and information transfer. The most noticeable difference after selective coding concerns the scores on *variety of interactions* and *Stimulating actors to actively participate in network*. The variety of interaction is relatively low in both networks due to the fact that it most frequently occurs within committees. Moreover, these

results show divergence in the scores on action related activities. The GPM scores very high on *Stimulating actors to actively participate in network* (N=9), while the VNG scores much higher on *coming up with innovative solutions* and *negotiate common goals* than the GPM.

In addition to the type of boundary spanning activities, the networks also diverge in boundary spanning agents. The GPM has a group of usual suspects that take on the role of boundary spanner in the network. This group consists of Secretariat employees, some municipal officers and 5 Executive Committee members. Opposite to this the VNG has a larger and more varied group of boundary spanners.

5.1.1 Boundary spanning in the GPM

The boundary spanning dimension interaction appears to be most present in the GPM. All respondents indicated some form of connection or linking activities. Respondent 11 described the GPM as:

“Well connected to the rest of the world so we can provide some different resources, from other nation states, other networks, other cities and entities like universities. We are really connected, we function as a connector. We can make connections to whatever is needed”

Mayors seem to mostly connect and link with other mayors and networks. *If members meet on events the exchange between them is very strong, however this exchange is less prevalent when mayors are distanced* (respondent 14). Whereas the connecting and linking activities of the city hall officials generally aim to find and maintain useful relationships, such as the connection with other city hall officials, which is usually also the initial stage of mayors connecting. Furthermore they are considered to be *the link between the GPM and their mayor* (Respondents 12 and 16). Finally secretariat employees are mostly responsible for making connections and linking actors within the GPM. Respondent 14 calls *the secretariat the core of connections, they are working on that 24 hours a day*. The secretariat aims at bringing members together for information exchange and best practices sharing.

In addition, the results also indicate the presence of information sharing activities. The Secretariat was considered the main information sharing agent in the GPM. They select relevant information, and then *share clear information with members and reply in a transparent way to members' questions* (respondent 12, 14, and 16). Besides that, they also *get information from members or outside actors and share that with GPM members* (respondent 10). Next to that, the city

hall officials are also main information sharing agents. They play a role on the boundary between the secretariat and their municipality/mayors (respondents 13, 16, and 18). *The officers collect information in order to write an advice for the mayor, they are also responsible to communicate information from their city to the secretariat and other members* (respondent 18). The mayors seem to act more on the boundary between the GPM and the environment. Some Executive Committee mayors have been invited to events to share the body of thought of the GPM (respondent 10) and thus inform actors outside the network. Therefore, the main critique on information sharing within the GPM is that *it mostly entails one way information streams* (respondent 10, 13, 14) and that a little amount of actors initiated information exchange. Moreover, *the information exchange usually occurs between the Secretariat and the usual suspects from the Executive Committee* (respondents 11, 12, 13, 14).

With regards to the action dimension, *stimulating actors to participate and mobilize actors to become members* are the most prevalent activities. Because of the short existence of the GPM, mayors *take it up to inform others about the GPM, and with that enthuse other mayors in becoming a member and support the GPM*. This happens on events where GPM mayors are invited, (respondent 10, 11, 12, 13, 17) but also through personal (regional) contacts (respondents 10, 15, 17). Also, *mayors arranged phone calls with other mayors to invite them to become a member or to participate in GPM events* (respondents 12, 13, 14). Additionally, the secretariat and executive committee encouraged other members to actively participate in the GPM and its committee (respondents 13, 14, and 18). Several respondents also expressed critique by emphasizing the need for action focused boundary spanning. GPM mayors should streamline the common goals and come up with concerted action. *The Annual Summit 2018 has been the start of this process, whereby mayors developed a declaration* (respondents 14, 15, 18). Now that the declaration is published *it is up to its members to work out how to jointly execute it* (respondents 13, 18).

5.1.2 Boundary spanning in the VNG

Boundary spanning related to connecting and linking is also most prevalent in the VNG. The Secretariat, board and committees are important boundary spanning agents within the network that *bring members together for information exchange and best practices sharing* (respondent 3, 4, 7) but also *at gatherings because of decision making or discussion of relevant themes* (respondent 1, 7, 2). Members also interconnect with other members (respondent 2, 5 6, 9) and

individually build relationships with outsiders such as the national government, foreign municipalities and trade and industry. These relationships can be structural or occasional. Additionally, there are also boundary spanners that connect the VNG with other (sub) networks. The mayor that fulfilled a role in the G40 board also fulfilled a role in the administrative board to enable a cooperation between both networks (respondent 5, 6, 8).

Seven respondents highlighted information sharing as boundary spanning activity. These activities are carried out across several boundaries within the VNG. The Secretariat presented a high demand for *information such as best practices, thematic info, and juridical articles* (respondents 1,3, 7). Committees also played a role in collecting information across boundaries, they organized a *roadshow on climate change and energy* where they *gather in the different provinces to collect everyone's perspectives* (respondent 2, 7). Consequently, the collected information needed to be shared and sometimes translated to the other actors in the network. The Secretariat is generally the unit that shares and translates information about *general decision making, but also about cooperation with the national government that consists of an explanation of the plans and intentions of the national government* (respondent 6).

The final boundary spanning category action comprises of mobilizing, streamlining, and innovating. The heterogeneous character of the VNG asks for streamlining capacities. The VNG consists of *a large variety of interests that all need to be taken into account, dealing with this by finding solutions accepted by all members* (respondent 1, 5). An example is the standpoint, which is negotiated on by the administrative board which represents all level of local government officials (respondent 7). Furthermore, *the division of municipal funds and the cooperation with the national government* required the streamlining capacities of boundary spanners (respondents 2 and 6). In addition, mobilizing other actors in the network happens in different ways. Members *enthuse each other because they show their achievements* (respondents 3, 7). Besides that, the Secretariat as well as the chairman actively encourage members' participation (respondent 3, 7, 8). Finally, by means of innovating and streamlining, the VNG is able to offer resources like the '*kindertelefoon*'.

5.1.3 Committee members and the Secretariat as boundary spanners

The VNG has a larger amount of thematic committees and an administrative committee which is the board than the GPM with just the Executive Committee. Also, the membership base of the VNG is less homogenous than that of the GPM, due to the fact that the whole municipality

is member of the network and not just the mayor. This results in committees that are made up of various municipal officials. This is opposed to GPM, where municipal officials are not official members but do contribute to the network in the background, assisting their mayor. After elaborating on the boundary spanners and their activities, this section will discuss the first expectation:

E1: Network members that play a role in a committee and secretariat employees are expected to be the main boundary spanners, and experience the highest boundary permeability

Within the GPM, the same five Executive Committees seemed to be recognized as boundary spanning agents. They stand out because they connect mayors, but also share information and mobilize other (prospective) members to participate actively in the network. Next to that, the Secretariat plays an important connecting and information sharing role, whereby they act across the boundaries between the municipalities. Furthermore, the city hall officers were not included in the expectation but do act as boundary spanners in the network. They generally act on the boundary between their municipality and those of other municipalities and the Secretariat.

In the VNG, the Secretariat and mayors/aldermen (in committees) are usually the boundary spanning agents that initiate information transfer within their committee (respondent 7). They also easily connect within the committees, but also connect to networks like G40⁴ and P10⁵. In addition, they mobilize other actors to participate and bring together interests and point of views. The municipal officer as boundary spanner generally only carries out the information exchange crossing the boundary between the VNG and their municipality (respondent 4). Moreover, the respondents (1, 4) that did not have a role in committees signaled more distance to other members, the decision making, and the information streams.

Thus, this expectation is partly true for the GPM because not all committee members were pointed out as boundary spanners and not only Committee members and Secretariat constitute boundary spanning agents, but city hall officials were also considered boundary spanners. With regards to the VNG, this expectation seems to be true. Their main boundary spanning agents are members that have an active role in one of the numerous committees, or officers from the secretariat.

⁴ Dutch network of the 40 largest cities in the Netherlands

⁵ Dutch network of the 10 largest rural municipalities in the Netherlands

5.2 The influence of boundary spanning on legitimacy and attractiveness

This chapter will focus on the relationship between boundary spanning and legitimacy. It will discuss whether the presence of boundary spanning increased the legitimacy, but it will also look at the three boundary spanning categories separately. In order to examine this the following expectations will be discussed:

2. Presence of more boundary spanning leads to a higher level of legitimacy, under the condition that it is experienced as useful by the actors in the network.

2a. Boundary spanning activities interaction and information transfer are most significant for throughput legitimacy

Next to that, this chapter will focus on the relation between boundary spanning and attractiveness. The expectations below will form the framework for the analysis.

3a. Presence of more boundary spanning will lead to a higher level of attractiveness, under the condition that it is experienced as useful by the actors in the network.

3a. Presence of boundary spanning leads to a higher level of trust

5.2.1 Boundary in relation to legitimacy and attractiveness of the GPM

The most frequently highlighted legitimacy factor is transparency. Respondents principally mention the positive affect of the information transfer related boundary spanning. The most influential boundary spanning agent appeared to be the Secretariat. The fact that *that the minutes of the daily board and Executive Committee members are created and shared by the Secretariat increased the transparency* (Respondents 12, 14, 17). *The Secretariat shared information mostly via the virtual platform and always tried to give a clear as possible formulation and explanation of the decision making process* (respondent 14). Furthermore, Respondent 16 says that *“if I request documents, I can always get access. And likewise, the secretariat can also ask, so I think it’s good”*. But also, mayors seem to increase transparency by means of information sharing. According to respondents 11 and 12, this occurs due to the fact that members promote and share information about the GPM. *“If they are talking about it, sharing information and promoting the GPM and exchanging information then everyone feels like it is very alive, and people understand who is doing what and where the information is coming from”* (respondent 12). Also, this way they are opening up for critical questions that need to be discussed and justified, which increases the transparency.

Voice constitutes the next factor of legitimacy. The GPM demonstrated a lower level of voice which is caused primarily by the small width of participation, while at the same time, the respondents perceived the decision making and projects as very accessible. Boundary spanning agents like the Secretariat employees and the usual suspects from the Executive Committee attempted to mobilize mayors from outside the network in order to increase the width. In addition, they stimulated members *to provide input for decision making or statements* (respondent 16) *or to become part of the Executive Committee* (respondent 14). Action as way of boundary spanning seemed to explain the sense of easy accessibility to internal processes but have not seemed to increase the width of participation yet. Thus, up until now, Action activities mobilizing and stimulating positively influence the access of decision making and projects but was not able to impact the width of participation yet.

The boundary spanning activities under the umbrella of interaction and action seemed to be most influential in relation to the due deliberation. The secretariat and five boundary spanning mayors from the Executive Committee appeared to have increased the quality of debates by means of their connecting and linking capacities. Whereby the Secretariat generally facilitated the deliberation by organizing debates and connecting the actors (respondent 17), while it was the mayors who interacted and maintain relationships across boundaries. It is the connection with

“experts, academics, they have the knowledge so that’s good. It is also good to get the less academic perspective of the city representatives, the representative, the mayors themselves. Which might not always be as educated as the experts. So then quality thereof is quite good” (respondent 16).

Next to that, the Secretariat steered towards higher levels of due deliberation by means of enhancing the opportunities for debate. They mobilized members from different cities to start a debate or take part in discussions. Even though there was ample opportunity for debate, this barely resulted in actual debates (respondent 18).

On the other hand, the respondents discussed some examples where the lack of boundary spanning decreased the perceived legitimacy. The critique mostly refers to information sharing activities and streamlining. The fact that *the secretariat is not able to reach some cities to provide them with the necessary information* (respondent 13, 14), or the fact that in some cases *the secretariat did not communicate all decisions with the members the past year but only*

with the Executive Committee was mentioned as having a negative effect on the perceived transparency (respondent 13). Furthermore, respondent 18 discussed a situation at the summit *where changes were not communicated on time*. Finally, respondent 18 said that at the moment *the discussion could be of better quality*. She indicated a need for the members to streamline the common goals and the direction of the GPM.

Even though, boundary spanning increases certain aspects of legitimacy, such as transparency and the accessibility to projects and decision making and possibility to have debates, it also does not seem to impact other parts such as the width of participation and the presence of debates (yet). In conclusion these findings present some evidence for the relation between boundary spanning and legitimacy. In particular with regards to the transparency, in which information transfer activities appeared to have the strongest effect on transparency. However, it must be noted that the boundary spanning activities were carried out by a selective group of boundary spanning agents. Thus not only the possible ineffectiveness but also the small amount of boundary spanners could explain the lower level of voice and due deliberation. This argument supports expectation 2, because the lack of effective boundary spanning and little amount of agent could explain the lower of legitimacy. Regarding expectation 2a, the data implies that especially information transfer increased the legitimacy. But due to the small number of boundary spanners and the low level of voice and due deliberation, it is not possible to verify or reject expectation 2a in the context of the GPM.

5.2.1.1 Attractiveness

The findings show that boundary spanning, and especially interaction activities helped to increase the added value. The findings present that access to other actors in the network, and cooperation with organization and networks were perceived as the main added value of the membership. The activities enabling and increasing the added value were carried out by the Secretariat and the mayors in the network. With regards to the access to other mayors, experts, and information boundary spanning agents played an important role in creating and enabling access. The Secretariat played a facilitating role in requests for meetings between mayors and experts from the Advisory Committee (respondents 10). But mayors also shared best practices or started city to city cooperation across boundaries with other cities in the network (respondent 12, 13, 14, 16). Next to that, the mayors share information across boundaries to inform others about what membership has brought them (respondent 12, 13, 14, 16). That way

the perception of the added value increases. *"They make it seem like it is worth being connected. Cutting edge information, they kind of bring it to life"* (respondent 12). Another added value of the GPM membership is the cooperation with other organizations and networks. The Secretariat first connected with the Talent Cities Program, after which they linked the program to two member cities. This enabled *joint cooperation between Talent Cities and Hoima and Kandahar* (Respondent 13 and 17). Next to that, the involved mayors maintained the relationship with the project organization and mobilizing local actors, making it possible for the program to be executed. Thus, the connecting and information sharing capacities of boundary spanners played a role in increasing the experienced added value.

Boundary spanning also positively influences the trust development in the GPM. The stage of the trust five respondents claim to be in is knowledge based trust. Due to the maintenance of good relationships, and because of positive meetings their trust increased (respondents 12, 14, 16, 17).

"There is a lot of trust. In the past there have been events were maybe brought to light something that we'd like the secretariat to just be mindful of because it's politically sensitive of nature. And they have always been great in accommodating us" (Respondent 16).

Besides interaction, streamlining the common goals enhanced the feeling of little to no presence of opportunistic behavior. This is caused by the experience that everyone in the network aims for the same goals but with each other's difference kept in mind.

"There was a harmonious atmosphere at the annual meeting in Bristol, in which there was certainly an eye for each other's interests and for the different positions that mayors have in different countries" (Respondent 18)

However, the respondents that were at the calculus based stage of trust development seemed to have experienced less boundary spanning in the sense that they have less or limited variety of connections. In addition, the respondents in calculus based stage were also not considered boundary spanning agents by the other respondents. Limited connection complicates trust development because the positive experiences necessary to increase to trust have been barely present.

Although there are boundary spanners present in the GPM, they largely consisted of the usual suspects; the more active members of the Executive Committee, their officers and

the Secretariat. The connecting and information transfer boundary spanning activities was quite limited at the moment. The information exchange was generally a one way stream initiated by the secretariat, and occasionally the more active members of the Executive Committee initiated information exchange. This lack of variety in boundary spanning is a possible explanation for the low dependency and relatively lower added value, compared to the VNG.

These results illustrate that the amount of boundary spanning present in the GPM, was considered as the drive behind the added value of the network. Furthermore, boundary spanning also positive influenced the trust development. The respondents that expressed and experienced more boundary spanning, indicated a higher level of trust than those who experienced less boundary spanning. Concluding, this demonstrates a positive influence of boundary spanning on attractiveness in the form of added value and trust development. Subsequently, it provides some evidence to confirm expectation 3 and 3a in the context of the GPM.

5.2.2 Boundary in relation to legitimacy and attractiveness of the VNG

The next sections examine the relationship between boundary spanning and, legitimacy and attractiveness. First, the focus lies on the impact on legitimacy, followed by attractiveness. This relationship is studies by means of analyzing expectations 2 and 3 in the context of the VNG.

5.2.1.2 Legitimacy

The communication and information in the VNG were in general described as open and clear. The findings show that several boundary spanning agents were part of the increased transparency. One of the main boundary spanners was the Secretariat, which collected and shared information but also organized information gathering. *For the theme energy and climate, they organized meetings in every province and brought together aldermen and policy officers to inform them on this topic* (respondent 7). In addition, members also perceived more transparency due to starting and maintaining connections in the network. Respondent 2 claimed that *he experienced the information and decision making processes as more transparent since he actively participated in a committee. Before that the VNG was, what he called a "far from my bed show"*. The positive influence of being a boundary spanning agent on the perceived transparency has been affirmed by members that were not part of a committee or the board. They expressed their

dependency on the information transfer by boundary spanners. Because *if you are not part of a committee or board you barely hear anything about what is discussed there. Therefore, you have to make sure that you are on those committees and also think about which committees are important to you and what you want to get out of them* (respondents 2, 4, 5, 6). Thus, municipalities that do not have a boundary spanner that acts between their municipality and the VNG, and in particular committees, result in the feeling of having no access to important information streams. Besides positive effects of boundary spanning, the findings also show examples of how failing or lacking boundary spanning activities such as information transfer have negative consequences for transparency. Respondents said *they received documents very late* (respondents 3, 4, 6) and *sometimes these documents showed up in the press before they had reached the other actors in the network* (respondent 2). Which underscores the significant influence of information transfer on the transparency.

The voice in the VNG is considerably higher compared to that of the GPM. This is caused by the width of participant, which is caused by the fact that all Dutch municipalities are a member of the VNG. Furthermore, the VNG governance structure is more elaborated. Next to the administrative board, there are also nine policy committees and two councils⁶. These committee members are actively involved in decision making and projects. In their role as boundary spanning agents, they streamline interests and work on a joint determination of the position of the VNG. In order to ensure a high level of voice, they mobilize members outside to give their input and actively participate in expert groups. This mobilization of members also happened through *tours visiting provinces and municipalities in the country* (respondents 2, 7). That way their input is collected, and finds its way from the bottom up to decision-making increasing the voice. Also, *the chair of VNG would not miss an opportunity to call on everyone to actively interfere with the VNG* (respondent 3). Finally, the VNG organization attempts increase the width of participation by *organizing gatherings for members to discuss certain topics* (respondent 2). They also made an effort to *improve the engagement of actors in the network through the digital lines, but that turns out to be difficult* (respondent 3).

Although boundary spanning seemed to have a positive influence on the voice of the VNG, there was also some critique. Boundary spanning as style of complexity management would in theory be suitable to overcome these challenges. The most frequently mentioned

⁶ <https://vng.nl/bestuur-en-commissies-vng/vng-commissies>

critique on participation in the VNG is that because of *its size it is difficult to involve everyone* (respondent 1, 5). The data showed that the level of participation and *engagement in decision-making is very high inside and around committees, but actors that find themselves further away are more difficult to involve* (respondents 2, 3). Next to that, the diversity of members leads to very diverse interests, which complicated the decision to participation. A municipality decided to *only engage in discussion and decision making on the social domain because they think that the interests there are most aligned* (respondent 5).

Also with regard to due deliberation, the VNG scored higher than the GPM. Boundary spanning agents play an important role in facilitating and including members, especially from outside committees, to take part in the deliberation processes. The secretariat facilitates the annual congress and therewith links and mobilizes the VNG members. Members consider the congress as *an excellent opportunity to participate in or start discussions and debates* (respondent 1, 4, 5, 9). Next to the Secretariat, there are also members that actively search for connections and sharing and receiving information and best practices (respondent 5) and therewith increase the presence of deliberation processes. Albeit, the data made it prevalent that the opportunity and presence of deliberation is higher within the committees and the board. The boundary spanners in committees that maintained relationships, were more positive about the due deliberation than those who were not considered to be boundary spanners. *The connection and short links between these committee members enable easy opportunities to start debates* (respondent 3, 5, 6, 9). Also, *most deliberation is done in more informal settings or in committees* (respondent 1, 7). They are also the ones that sit on the table with different stakeholders like the local government actors and national government actors and try to streamline interests and mobilize joint processes (respondent 7). *The connection with stakeholders such as representatives of sub networks has also increased the quality of the debates. This diversity of voice and their feedback to their sub network ensures a certain level of quality* (respondent 5). Again, the large membership as a challenge for the boundary spanner was mentioned (respondent 5). It complicates the participation in deliberation, especially for the smaller municipalities, and thus negatively impacts the due deliberation (respondent 5).

In conclusion, these results show that boundary spanning positively impacts legitimacy in the VNG. Members in the network indicated the dependence on boundary spanners for the access to information. Furthermore, boundary spanners increased the actual

participation mostly by means of mobilizing other actors. Their effort resulted in the involvement of more varied actors in the internal process, and therewith did not only increase the voice within the network but it also increased the quality of the debates. But also being a boundary spanning agent increased the perception of higher levels of legitimacy. The respondents that were considered main boundary spanners (Secretariat, mayors and aldermen in committees) expressed to be close to information and decision making. Furthermore, they took part in more debates and experienced more opportunities for debates. These arguments provide evidence to confirm expectation 2. However, the findings did not show a clear-cut image of which boundary spanning activities were most significant in relation to the legitimacy. However, the respondents seemed to mostly relate information transfer, interaction and mobilizing to increased legitimacy. Therefore, Expectation 2a is rejected in the context of the VNG.

5.2.1.3 *Attractiveness*

According to the respondents the added value of the VNG membership is threefold and is based on the access to other actors in the network, the access to resources and knowledge and the possibility to form a joint front against the national government. The efforts of boundary spanning agents have been supporting the establishing and enabling the added value. The data shows that connecting and linking capacities of boundary spanners enable connections within the network. Respondent 1 explained this as having *the possibility to meet municipalities that face the same issues or challenges that need solutions, and to mutually discuss this*. Boundary spanning agents from a municipality can initiate this connection, but the VNG Secretariat can also play a connecting role in this. Members also approach the VNG, which at their turn shares relevant information or connect municipalities that are dealing with similar issues (respondents 2, 4)

The data presents different views about the joint front towards the national governments, some consider this as an added value while others stress that the joint advocacy is the reason for the dependency on the VNG. This joint advocacy seemed to be strongly subjected to the influence of boundary spanning. In order *to form one front of municipalities against the national government, it is important that boundary spanners streamline the interests of small, large, urban and rural areas. Find a joint solution and make sure everyone is administered*

(respondent 1, 5, 7). A boundary spanning agent that had a positive impact on the joint advocacy is the current chairman.

“He was requested to stay chairman because of his appreciated connecting role in the VNG. He understands both small and large municipalities enabling him to easily connect them and find common ground” (respondent 3).

However, the joint advocacy also comes with challenges for boundary spanners. An *area of tension concerned the differences between small and large municipalities, because their interests are often perceived as each other’s opposites* (respondent 1, 7). When streamlining is not carried out properly and feels too much like a compromise, it makes the network less attractive (respondent 8). This resulted in the decision of certain municipalities to *only participate on topics that have less diverging interests, like the social domain* (respondent 4). Moreover, there is a diverging idea on the dependence on joint advocacy, several respondents claim that *smaller municipalities are more dependent on the network than larger ones*.

“The bigger cities do not always need the back up from VNG but are capable of achieving things on their own. But the choice of national cooperation between municipalities is accompanied by some form of dependency” (respondent 8).

Albeit, all recognized that the interconnectedness and the links between the municipalities empowered their voice and therefore made their advocacy more powerful.

Finally, VNG respondents found themselves in the second stage of trust development: knowledge-based trust. The data indicated that connecting and linking, and mobilizing and streamlining were the most significant impacting boundary spanning activities. *“the connecting capacities are important to create trust”* (respondent 3). Trust is based on *personal contact* (respondent 4) and *working on a common goal together* (respondent 1, 3).

“a common need for cooperation is increasing based on the realization that we no longer want and can do it alone. This new way of working and steps in the right direction give confidence” (respondent 9).

Mayors and aldermen that are boundary spanners and actively participate in a committee indicated higher levels of trust. Because they are *part of what is going on themselves. In the past it was mostly a ‘far from my bed show’ whereby they were only informed of the results* (respondent 2). In addition, mobilizing and innovating seem to have a positive effect. By means of new

innovative collaborations like the implementation of the '*interbestuurlijke programma*',⁷ the trust amongst the VNG grew. The positive and successful stories as a result of this new program provided renewed confidence in horizontal cooperation within the VNG. Constraints on trust development were caused by primarily lacking information transfer. *Agreements that were signed while members were not informed, or the difficulty of obtaining contact details were both signs of decreasing trust* (respondent 4).

These results highlight that the presence of boundary spanning activities led to higher level of attractiveness. But only under the condition that it is experienced as useful and fair by the actors in the network. Whereas interaction and information transfers were mostly related to the perceived added value, streamlining and innovating seemed to generally create dependency on the network. Furthermore, connecting and linking, and streamlining appeared to enhance the trust development and positively influence trust. In addition to that it should be noted that if the information transfer is experienced as lacking or unfair, it negatively influences trust development. Hence, the case of the VNG provided evidence to verify expectation 3 and 3a. The presence of boundary spanning led to the increase of attractiveness, and in particular, influenced the development of trust.

5.3 The link between legitimacy and attractiveness

The data shows that there are several ways in which legitimacy and attractiveness are interrelated. The findings indicate primarily a moderating effect of legitimacy on the attractiveness, and in particular trust and added value. However, this link was more visible in the VNG than the GPM, which can be explained by the fact that the GPM is still in a developmental stage, and presented lower levels of legitimacy and attractiveness.

In both networks, being part of a committee or board resulted in more participation in decision making and being close to the information. It increased the transparency because they were no longer dependent on others for information. This not only increased their perception of due deliberation, but also of transparency. Subsequently this had a positive impact on their trust. Because instead of receiving only the conclusion, they were part of the whole process and learnt how the decision was shaped. The fact that they were aware of all the aspects of the decision makes that they perceive the decision as more legit and increased their trust.

⁷ A Dutch program that strives for a different way of thinking, and for acting as one single government that center its attention on policy implementation and inhabitants

"In the past it was mostly a 'far from my bed show'. You were mainly told about the conclusion and if you really tried you could also find out how they got from a to b and then reached the decision. But now that I am part of those conversations and considerations I helps to increase my confidence" (Respondent 2).

The positive influence of transparency is summarized by respondent 16, who claims that: *"Things are being done fairly and transparent, increases attractiveness"*. Respondent 5 and 8 mentioned why voice and due deliberation increased the trust.

The 'interbestuurlijke programma' ensured that the VNG, Interprovincial Overleg (interest group of Dutch provinces), and the Union of Water Boards, which are the 3 umbrella organizations of local authorities, have come closer to each other. There were more consultation in which all parties were included. Even though some conflict of interests remain, the trust has increased.

Another reason why perceived high levels of voice increased the attractiveness can be explained by the influence of high width and variety of participants on both trust and, the added value or, dependency on joint advocacy or the division of the municipal funds.

The VNG consists of declining and growing municipalities, urban and rural municipalities, and small and large municipalities that all have different interests. The committees and board are composed in well thought out way, whereby are represented in a proportionate way in the board but also in all committees. This ensures that everyone is represented in the joint advocacy and division of municipal funds. Furthermore, discussing these different interests openly increases trust (respondent 5).

As mentioned earlier, the moderating effect of legitimacy on attractive is primarily visible in the VNG. But, the GPM data seems to support this, albeit by looking at negative effects of low deliberation and voice. Respondent 14 claimed that when there is a lack of participation this does not benefit trust development. Besides that, debate and discussions need to be relevant and not excessive.

"But I suppose being on the exco with the back and forth of emails; does everyone approve, how about this full stop here. I don't agree with this word. It's a lot, but it has to happen. It possibly can decrease the attractiveness" (respondent 16).

In conclusion, these findings provide evidence to support expectation 4.

6. Discussion

This explorative research aimed to gain more in-depth knowledge on the role of boundary spanning in governance networks. Furthermore it aspires to contribute to the gap in the literature on the relation between boundary spanning on the one hand, and legitimacy and attractiveness on the other hand. Therefore, this chapter will first discuss the empirical results in the light of previous literature, followed by a discussion on the limitations of this research.

6.1 Scientific discussion

The empirical results of this research largely confirm the existing theories on the relation between boundary spanning and trust and legitimacy. The findings showed a positive influence of boundary spanning on attractiveness and legitimacy, they furthermore demonstrated the moderating effect of legitimacy on attractiveness, primarily in the VNG.

In accordance with Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos (2014), this study found a positive relation between boundary spanning and trust. The positive influence of connecting management was also present in both GPM and VNG. The fact that the members interacted and built positive experiences increased their level of trust. This reinforces the idea that connective management is an important characteristic, not only for performance but also for attractiveness. However, the present study used the theory of Lewicki on trust, which differs from van Meerkerk. This theory was selected because it gives a clear cut image of the trust development stage of the network.

Regarding the relationship between boundary spanning and legitimacy, the main findings of van Meerkerk (2014) indicated the importance of bringing actors together to improve the quality of decision making processes. However, the results of this research showed that next to bringing actors together, also information sharing and mobilizing to participate positively influenced the legitimacy. Furthermore, the influence of mobilizing and connecting was more significant in the VNG than in GPM.

The existing literature focused mainly on boundary spanning in relation to trust and performance. But, especially for governance networks that are on a voluntary basis, legitimacy and attractiveness are also crucial aspects of the existence of the networks. Up until now studies on this as well as on the relation between boundary spanning and legitimacy and attractiveness remain scarce or absent. This thesis initiated the exploration of this topic but requires further research.

6.2 Limitations

The results of this study have to be seen in the light of some limitations. We have to take in mind that attractiveness and legitimacy are subject to other factors than boundary spanning. This research has not singled out these other factors, but solely focused on boundary spanning. Besides that, the clear distinction between the different boundary spanning categories present in the operationalization scheme was less clear in practice.

Furthermore, this research was conducted in a time frame of eight months. The limited time available had its constraint on the scope of the research and the access to participants. The fact that the target group consists of mayors and aldermen represented a large challenge and was the main reason for the limited access to respondents. Their busy schedules and political function complicated the gathering of the largest variety respondents possible. Moreover, actors that were not involved in committees barely participated in this research because they declined the invitation. Therefore the sample did not result in a perfect representation.

Finally, the research has been conducted in the period between May and November 2018, whereby the research focused on a certain moment in time rather than the development over time. However, the context of the research is subject to changes. These changes have not been included in this research and ask for a longitudinal study in the future. Although generalizability and clear-cut verdicts are not possible in this research, the results still offer in-depth explorative knowledge on the phenomena under study and therewith provide a basis for further research.

6.3 Future research

This explorative research provided some in-depth knowledge on the relationship between boundary spanning and legitimacy and attractiveness but there are other relevant factors that have not been taken in to account and ask for further research. Furthermore, it was not possible to confirm all expectations. Therefore three directions of further research are suggested

- Single out other factors that influence legitimacy and attractiveness

As discussed earlier, this research didn't take factors like time, path dependency and framing into account. These factors together with boundary spanning might explain and influence the attractiveness and legitimacy. Therefore for further research this research should be carried

out while taking other factors into account to gain a further understanding of the phenomena under study.

- Investigate the possible mediating role of legitimacy on attractiveness.

Due to the limited scope of the research, only the direct relation between boundary spanning on the one hand and legitimacy and attractiveness on the other have been studied. Therefore, for future research it is suggested to examine the possibility of legitimacy as mediating variable as well.

- Repetition of this research in five years.

The GPM is still in its initial developmental stage at the moment with a limited amount of members. It is working on the common goals and concerted action. Furthermore, Deetman introduced a new form of governance to the VNG whereby focus lies on more horizontal lines. A repetition of this research can test the preliminary results of this explorative research by means of a larger sample, but also by means of taking other factors into account. This repetition requires a sample that is more representative. But also should include an evaluation of implementation of the recommendations by Deetman and therewith increase the study on the influence of boundary spanning.

7. Conclusion

The rise of interactive governance networks requires more knowledge on its management. Networks cannot be managed as organizations, due to its horizontal structure and the fact that boundary crossing is necessary for establishing networks. Therefore this thesis investigated the role of boundary spanning as management style and how it affects the perceived legitimacy and attractiveness of governance networks. In particular, two local government networks were studied, the VNG and GPM. In order to examine this relationship the sub questions below have been defined in order to answer the main research question.

1. *What makes GPM and VNG, a supranational and national networks with local members, attractive to its members?*

The VNG seems to be more attractive to its members than the GPM. The VNG respondents indicate more added value, higher dependency and a higher stage of trust development. The results showed that the added value of the membership is what makes the networks most attractive. However what the added value is, is perceived differently in both networks. Furthermore the fact that it is a mayors only network with shared frames focused on city leadership is what makes the GPM attractive. Moreover, dependency is another aspect that defines the attractiveness of the VNG, while this is absent in the GPM. The final dimension of attractiveness is trust. VNG members turn out to be in the knowledge-based stage of trust, while the perception of trust is more diverging in the GPM. Some respondent find themselves in the calculus-based stage while others are in the knowledge-based stage.

2. *How do members perceive the throughput legitimacy of the GPM and VNG, and how is this related to the networks' attractiveness?*

The results show that in general VNG is perceived as more legitimate than the GPM, but that there are some variations in between the individual dimensions. Both networks score similarly on transparency, however the size of the network, speed of decision making and failing boundary spanning negatively influence the transparency in the VNG. The difference between both networks is mostly related to voice and due deliberation. VNG scores high on the voice in their decision making processes due to its the presence of a big variety of participants. This is barely the case in the GPM, where the voice is defined by the easy access to decision making. At last, the VNG presents more due deliberation, there were debates in the network and actors also experienced the opportunities to start one. The GPM also offers the opportunity to start

debates, but actual debates are still lacking. It must be noted that the presence of debate and opportunities for debate are primarily apparent in the committees and the board.

With respect to the relationship between legitimacy and attractiveness, we see a moderating effect of legitimacy on attractiveness. In particular in the VNG, transparency, voice, and due deliberation positively affect trust development and perceived added value. The GPM data demonstrated lower levels of voice and due deliberation and therefore less evidence was provided for this moderating relationship.

3. *Who can be identified as boundary spanners, what are their main boundary spanning activities?*

Boundary spanning is present in both networks, but it appears in different forms. Boundary spanners are in principal members that have an active role in one of the numerous committees, or employees of the secretariat. Within GPM, every group of actors seem to mainly carry out specific boundary spanning activities matching to their function in the network. The VNG is a more heterogeneous network in which this division, like in the GPM, is less visible. Furthermore, the VNG is a larger network that also has more boundary spanners. The most significant boundary spanning activities that were present in the networks consists of connecting and linking, information transfer, and mobilizing and streamlining. Although the GPM boundary spanners focus on mobilizing, and VNG boundary spanners on streamlining. The initial stage of the GPM can explain this distinction because their goal is mobilize actors in order to increase participation and membership base. Meanwhile the VNG is in a mature state that aims at streamlining interests and form a joint advocacy.

The main research question reads as follows:

How does boundary spanning influence the legitimacy and attractiveness of the GPM and VNG, and how do these networks differ from each other?

The networks differ from each other on several points. First, the perception of what makes the network attractive and legitimate differs. Secondly, the respondents perceive the level of legitimacy and attractiveness differently, and lastly the two network demonstrate differences in boundary spanning. The GPM presents less boundary spanning, but also scored lower on legitimacy and attractiveness. Meanwhile the VNG presents more boundary spanning but also higher levels of legitimacy and attractiveness. The difference of attractiveness and legitimacy between both networks can be partly explained by means of

boundary spanning⁸. VNG has more boundary spanners that carry out a larger variety of boundary spanning activities than the GPM which has led to higher levels of legitimacy.

This research confirms the theoretically expected positive relationship between boundary spanning and the perceived legitimacy, especially with regards to transparency. The data shows that information transfer is the most significant boundary spanning activity in relation to transparency. The fact that voice and due deliberation differ so much between both networks can be partly explained by the difference in boundary spanners and boundary spanning. With regard to voice, the respondents discussed the mobilizing actions of boundary spanning to increase the voice. However the boundary spanners seemed effective in the VNG but not (yet) in the GPM. Therefore we cannot conclude that is only the positive influence of action boundary spanning that increase the voice. There must be other factors that also play a role in increasing the voice. In addition, the findings show that primarily boundary spanners in the networks experience more debates but also more opportunity to start a debate.

The findings of this research also provides support for the positive relationship between boundary spanning and attractiveness. GPM and VNG underscored that the added value of being part of the network consists of the connection with other actors in the members. This shows the importance of boundary spanning activities as connecting and linking. But also the importance of streamlining for the joint advocacy in the VNG. However, the two networks show diverging opinions on the dependency on the network. This dependency seems to be created by, amongst others, the boundary spanners carrying out action activities like innovating and streamlining. The fact that these boundary spanning activities are not present in the GPM could be an explanatory factor for the difference in attractiveness between both networks.

Finally the level of trust is higher in the VNG than in GPM. First of all, trust is also dependent on time and is expected to increase over time. This is the main explanatory factor for the difference in trust development. The GPM has been recently established while the VNG exists for 100 years and already has a track record of its achievements but also has a longer history with more boundary spanners. With regards to the effect of boundary spanning, the GPM members that were considered the main boundary spanners in the network

⁸ Factors like time, development stage, path dependency, framing and cultural difference are probably also explanatory factors. These however have not been taken into account in this study.

demonstrated a higher level of trust development than those who were not. Because of their frequent interactions and positive experiences their trust in the GPM has grown. This shows that next to time, boundary spanning in the sense of positively experienced interaction can accelerate the trust development.

7.1 Recommendations

This comparative case study presents in-depth knowledge on the contribution of boundary spanning to legitimacy and attractiveness. Each network deal with issues in its own way. VNG is more mature and attractive, and therefore can serve as an example for the GPM. The recommendations to GPM are based on the aspects of the networks appreciated by the respondents. Four recommendations can be given to the GPM:

1. Create more committees

The VNG has many committees and actors involved. This heterogeneity seems to be an asset. The GPM has only one (executive) committee. Respondents participating in committees experience higher level of transparency and more access to debates and decision making. They interact on a more regular bases which increases the level of trust. I propose that GPM starts committees on three focus themes: urban security, migration, and health.

2. Ambassadors per theme

A next step for GPM could be appointing ambassadors for each of the three themes, whom could serve as chairs of the committees too. In their role as ambassadors, members will be extra motivated to fulfill the role as boundary spanners. That will increase the voice and due deliberation by means of mobilizing others to participate. But also by means of selecting and transferring information make the theme more transparent to others. With them being the main information sharing actors on that theme, a part of the information sharing pressure will be taking off the Secretariat. Furthermore the ambassadors could streamline the goals and concerted action which appears to be important for the attractiveness of the network.

3. Increase of trust

The GPM and its ideas form a basis to reach higher level of trust. Respondent 11 argues that trust is based around Benjamin Barber. So people feel that if there is a connection with him, there is implicit trust: everyone is working for his legacy. In addition to that, the mayors in the GPM are less competing for resources as in the VNG. Some respondents claimed that competition and the need for compromises decreased the trust and attractiveness of the VNG. In that sense GPM has an advantage. The lack competition for resources opens up the way to identification based trust, based on shared ideas of local leadership. Thus the absence of opportunistic behavior together with increase of boundary spanning could eventually lead to the highest level of trust in the GPM.

4. Create some kind of dependency.

The members of the GPM do not experience dependency on the network, in contrast to the VNG. This is the main reason why VNG is perceived to be more attractive to its members. The VNG offers model regulations, joint facilities like the 'kindertelefoon' and joint lobby towards the Dutch national government. Creating higher degrees of dependency should be a strategy for GPM to increase its attractiveness. After reaching the threshold for the membership base and having set the joint goals and concerted action, they could extend a joint lobby towards the UN or other influential organizations, like the EU.

Finally, one recommendation can be given to the VNG:

1. Show off resources and knowledge

Half of the VNG members are not aware of full size of resources and knowledge the VNG has to offer. Furthermore the data shows that actors in the network value the resources, but the majority does not realize its dependence on the VNG for resources but also to achieve certain goals. Therefore, in order to increase the attractiveness should be introduced to the full potential of the VNG and be made aware of their access to these possibilities, for example by means of boundary spanners.

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I Questionnaire

Aantrekkelijkheid

1. Wat is uw rol binnen de VNG?
2. Welke factoren maken het aantrekkelijk om lid te zijn van de VNG?
3. Wat voor middelen/kennis verkrijgt u vanuit de VNG waar u anders geen toegang tot zou hebben?
4. Is uw gemeente afhankelijk van de VNG en de andere gemeenten binnen de VNG om bepaalde doelen te realiseren?
5. Zijn er ook gebeurtenissen of factoren die het lidmaatschap minder aantrekkelijk maken, kunt (een) voorbeeld(en) noemen?

Vertrouwen

Vertrouwen wordt in mijn onderzoek gedefinieerd als positieve verwachting van de ander om af te zien van opportunistisch gedrag wanneer zij hier toe de mogelijkheid hebben. Dat de ander rekening houdt met uw belangen/belangen van de gemeente en dat wordt nagekomen wat er gezegd wordt.

1. Hoe zou u uw vertrouwen in het netwerk (VNG) en de netwerkpartners omschrijven?
2. Zou u kunnen uitleggen waarop dit vertrouwen gebaseerd is? (Bijv. eerdere ervaringen, afwegen voor- en nadelen)
3. Kunt u een voorbeeld noemen van iets dat uw vertrouwen vergroot en verminderd heeft?

Legitimiteit

1. Op welke wijze neemt u(w gemeente) deel aan besluitvorming binnen de VNG?
2. Is de informatievoorziening omtrent de inhoud en het proces van de besluitvorming transparant?
3. Vindt u dat binnen de VNG voldoende gecommuniceerd wordt met, en geparticipeerd wordt door de leden?

4. Wat vindt u van de mogelijkheid tot overleg en debat binnen de VNG?
5. Zijn er ook factoren of gebeurtenissen die de besluitvorming en informatievoorziening minder transparant maken?

Verbinder

- a) Zijn er in uw ogen leden van de VNG waarvan duidelijk naar voren komt dat zij een actievere rol aannemen binnen de VNG? Waaruit blijkt dat zij actiever zijn dan anderen?
- b) Zijn er bepaalde VNG leden die in uw ogen een verbindende rol hebben tussen de VNG leden, of tussen de VNG en andere organisaties?
- c) Vindt er binnen de VNG goede informatie-uitwisseling plaats? Zijn het vaak dezelfde commissies/leden die deze informatie-uitwisseling tot stand brengen?
- d) Hebben deze verbindende actieve leden invloed op de aantrekkelijkheid van het lidmaatschap? En zorgen zij ervoor dat u de besluitvorming en informatievoorziening als meer transparant ervaart?
- e) Wie stellen de doelen voor de VNG op en hoe wordt de gezamenlijke agenda gevormd?
- f) De vorige vragen zijn gericht op verbinders in het netwerk? Ziet u uw zelf als verbinder binnen de VNG?

Internationale netwerken

1. Is ... lid van andere (internationale) netwerken, waarom wel/niet?
2. Wat zijn factoren die het aantrekkelijk zouden maken om lid te worden van een internationaal netwerk? En welke factoren maken het minder aantrekkelijk om lid te worden van een internationaal netwerk?

II Interview questions GPM

Attractiveness

1. What role do you play in the GPM?
2. Which factors make GPM membership attractive?
3. Which resources or knowledge is provided by the GPM, which would otherwise be inaccessible?
4. Is your municipality/city dependent on the GPM and its members to realize certain goals?
5. Are there factors or were there events that decreased the attractiveness of GPM membership?

Trust

In my research trust is defined as the positive expectation that others abstain from opportunistic behavior even when an opportunity occurs. Not taking advantage, and keeping others' interests in mind.

1. How would you describe (the level of) your trust in the GPM?
2. Could you explain what forms the basis of your trust? For example compare costs benefits, prior experiences
3. Do you have an example of something that increased your trust
 - a) Example of something that decreased your trust?

Legitimacy

1. How do you and your city participate in the decision- making process of the GPM?
2. How is your access to the information in the network? How transparent is this and how transparent are the decision making processes?
3. What do you think of the communication between and participation of GPM members?
4. What do you think about the participation? and to what extent is the network accessible for anyone interested
5. What do you think of the deliberation? Are there opportunities for debate and what do you think about the quality of the debates?
6. Are there events or factors that have increased/decreased the transparency of decision-making and information provision?

Boundary spanner

1. Are there, in your opinion, GPM members that take a more active role than others?
 - a) Can you give examples of what makes them more active?
2. Are there GPM members that seem to have a connecting role within the GPM? But also with outside organizations?
3. What do you think of the information exchange between the actors in the GPM network?
 - a) Is it usually initiated by the same actor?
 - b) Is it usually between the same actors?
4. Do you think these active members increase the attractiveness of the GPM membership?
 - a) Do they increase the transparency of the information provision and decision-making?
5. Who sets the common goals, and how is the joint agenda formed?
6. The last questions were focused on the connectors within the network, do you see yourself as a connector?
 - a) Does your connecting role increased your trust in the GPM?
 - b) do you experience the network as more transparent since you've become more active?

III Interview questions VNG

Aantrekkelijkheid

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2. Welke factoren maken het aantrekkelijk om lid te zijn van de VNG?
3. Wat voor middelen/kennis verkrijgt u vanuit de VNG waar u anders geen toegang tot zou hebben?
4. Is uw gemeente afhankelijk van de VNG en de andere gemeenten binnen de VNG om bepaalde doelen te realiseren?
5. Zijn er ook gebeurtenissen of factoren die het lidmaatschap minder aantrekkelijk maken, kunt (een) voorbeeld(en) noemen?

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3. Kunt u een voorbeeld noemen van iets dat uw vertrouwen vergroot en verminderd heeft?

Legitimiteit

1. Op welke wijze neemt u(w gemeente) deel aan besluitvorming binnen de VNG?
2. Is de informatievoorziening omtrent de inhoud en het proces van de besluitvorming transparant?
3. Wat vindt u van de communicatie tussen de leden en de participatie van de leden?
4. Wat vindt u van de mogelijkheid tot overleg en debat binnen de VNG?
5. Zijn er ook factoren of gebeurtenissen die de besluitvorming en informatievoorziening minder transparant maken?

Verbinder

1. Zijn er in uw ogen leden van de VNG waarvan duidelijk naar voren komt dat zij een actievere rol aannemen binnen de VNG?
 - a) Waaruit blijkt dat zij actiever zijn dan anderen?
2. Zijn er bepaalde VNG leden die in uw ogen een verbindende rol hebben tussen de VNG leden, of tussen de VNG en andere organisaties?
3. Vindt er binnen de VNG goede informatie-uitwisseling plaats?
 - a) Zijn het vaak dezelfde commissies/leden die deze informatie-uitwisseling tot stand brengen?
4. Hebben deze verbindende actieve leden invloed op de aantrekkelijkheid van het lidmaatschap?
 - a) Zorgen zij ervoor dat u de besluitvorming en informatievoorziening als meer transparant ervaart?
5. Wie stellen de doelen voor de VNG op en hoe wordt de gezamenlijke agenda gevormd?
6. De vorige vragen zijn gericht op verbinders in het netwerk? Ziet u uw zelf als verbinder binnen de VNG?

Internationale netwerken

1. Is uw gemeente lid van andere (internationale) netwerken?
 - a) waarom wel/niet?
7. Wat zijn factoren die het aantrekkelijk zouden maken om lid te worden van een internationaal netwerk?
8. Welke factoren maken het minder aantrekkelijk om lid te worden van een internationaal netwerk?
9. Bent u bekend met het Global Parliament of Mayors? Zo, ja wat zouden overwegingen zijn om lid te worden?
 - a) En overwegingen om niet lid te worden?

IV Summary selective codes

Variables	GPM	VNG
Boundary spanning		
1.1 Interaction		

1.1.1 Finding partners and build useful and sustainable relationships	7+ 2 O 0-	9+ 0 O 0-
1.1.2 Maintain useful relationships	6+ 2 O 1-	7+ 1 O 1-
1.1.3 Variety of interactions	3+ 5 O 1-	4+ 4 O 1-
1.1.4 Develop a joint agenda	3+ 6 O 0-	7+ 2 O 0-
1.2 Information transfer		
1.2.1 select relevant information	6+ 3 O 0-	5+ 4 O 0-
1.2.2 information shared	7+ 1 O 2-	8+ 1 O 0-
1.2.3 information experienced as relevant	4+ 5 O 0-	5+ 4 O 0-
1.3 Action		
1.3.1 Stimulating actors to actively participate in network	9+ 0 O 0-	6+ 3 O 0-
1.3.2 mobilize actors after change event	3+ 6 O 0-	3+ 6 O 0-
1.3.3 Negotiate common goals	4+ 5 O 0-	7+ 1 O 1-
1.3.4 establish agreements between actors	2+ 7 O 0-	5+ 4 O 0-
1.3.5 come up with innovative solutions	0+ 9 O 0-	4+ 5 O 0-
Throughput Legitimacy		
2.1 Transparency		
2.1.1 clear information	3+ 5 O 1-	1+ 7 O 1-
2.1.2 information is accessible	6+ 3 O 0-	5+ 1 O 3-
2.1.3 transparent decision making processes	7+ 2 O 0-	7+ 2 O 0-
2.1.4 public display of decision-making points and decisions	0+ 8 O 1-	3+ 6 O 0-
2.2 Voice		
2.2.1 big number of participants	0+ 7 O 2-	5+ 3 O 1-
2.2.2 big variety of participants	2+ 6 O 1-	5+ 4 O 0-
2.2.3 open to new participants	2+ 7 O 0-	1+ 8 O 0-
2.2.4 easy access to participate	5+ 4 O 0-	0+ 7 O 2-
2.3 Due deliberation		
2.3.1 presence of debates	1+ 3 O 2-	7+ 2 O 0-
2.3.2 possibility to start debates	5+ 4 O 0-	5+ 2 O 2-
2.3.3 results of debate lead to change	2+ 6 O 1-	2+ 7 O 0-
2.4 Boundary permeability		
2.4.1 cooperation with other actors/commissions in network	6+ 3 O 0-	7+ 2 O 0-
2.4.2 cooperation with actors from outside the network	6+ 3 O 0-	8+ 1 O 0-
Attractiveness		
3.1 Trust		
3.1.2 cost benefits to define trust	6+ 3 O 0-	4+ 5 O 0-
3.1.3 prior experiences define trust	5+ 4 O 0-	8+ 1 O 0-
3.1.4 shared interests, values, choices	1+ 8 O 0-	0+ 9 O 0-
3.2 expected value from being associated with network		
3.2.1 network alignment provides superior benefits	6+ 2 O 0-	9+ 0 O 0-
3.2.2 access to resources and knowledge	7+ 2 O 0-	8 0 O 1-
3.3 Dependency		
3.3.1 network necessary to accomplish goals	2+ 6 O 1-	5+ 3 O 1-
3.3.2 dependent on network	1+ 1 O 7-	4+ 2 O 3-

3.4 attractors		
<i>3.4.1 correspondence processes with value structures of society</i>	1+ 8 O 0-	1+ 8 O 0-
<i>3.4.2 shared frames, views on topics</i>	7+ 2 O 0-	4+ 5 O 0-
<i>3.4.3 persons that serve as examples</i>	3+ 6 O 0-	1+ 8 O 0-
<i>3.4.4 big names</i>	0+ 9 O 0-	2+ 8 O 0-
<i>3.4.5 interesting themes/topics</i>	5+ 4 O 0-	3+ 6 O 0-