

Area Cooperative Westerkwartier: a practitioner's overview

Drs. Willem Foorthuis

Professor Sustainable Cooperative Enterprise UAS Hanzehogeschool Groningen

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to Marcel van der Werf Msc and Dr Jannes Houkes for their helpful comments.

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to present the emergence of a new cooperative model for sustainable regional development through social enterprise, rooted in a historical context of societal change in the Netherlands. Our case study is the Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier (GCW), a large-scale area and integrated cooperative with more than 600 organizational and institutional members within the scope of the Dutch northern rural region Westerkwartier. The paper focuses on the mechanisms by which the cooperative facilitates new connections between actors in the quadruple helix of government, entrepreneurs, education and civil society, with the goal of generating both economic and social returns. Based on empirical evidence, possibilities are explored for new business models that combine economic thinking with innovative ways of utilising regional qualities for shared, value-driven governance and enterprise.

Regional chains – a cooperative business model with added value

You are reading the first presentation of the results of the GCW, in which we will publish the results of the practical research within the research group of Sustainable Cooperative Enterprise. The research group is part of the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Hanzehogeschool Groningen (UAS) and connected to the Institute of Financial Economic Management (FEM). In this paper we will look back at the developments concerning the GCW.

An important task for the GCW is training new competences and skills for all stakeholders as the traditional agricultural function of the Westerkwartier threatens to decline and an increasing focus in this region will be on new functions as nature conservation, landscape and recreation as well. By that we are not referring to new professional knowledge only. Perhaps even more important is a change in attitude and behaviour of us all. We can only survive if we grow from competition to co-operation. In a way, this does not only apply to entrepreneurs. After all, authorities, educators and researchers all wish to work in a different manner. They are structurally committing themselves to regional processes.

The GCW connects entrepreneurs, nature management, educational institutions, government and citizens in the Westerkwartier region, and on a larger scale in the urban area Groningen-Assen. Together we focus on the development of new collective chains in the area. Examples are food, energy, water management, nature, bio based economy, health, social work and health care – subjects which are all essential to the future of the area.

In this way the GCW is making an important contribution to the realisation of the Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) and Northern Innovation Agenda (NIA).

The employers organisations VNO-NCW Noord and MKB Noord are vigorously stepping up sharing knowledge and experience and stimulating the innovative strength of northern businesses. In the quadruple helix of entrepreneurs, education, civil society and government we can develop new knowledge and understanding and apply these to questions of the region. As shown in figure 1, this quadruple helix already created multiple jobs within the region. This is the reason why parties involved in the GCW have been co-operating for years, with an extensive package of investments,

to share experiences and current issues, based on equality of parties, and thus get the best from every stakeholder. Nowadays the cooperation between stakeholders is starting to pay off financially. By 2015 the cooperative managed to achieve its first positive financial returns (figure 2).

Newly created jobs

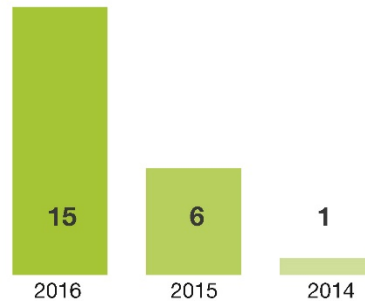


Figure 1: Number of created jobs

Yearly figures	2015	2014
Yield	€ 556.330	€ 61.098
Cost	€ 553.000	€ 72.364
Result	€ 3.330	€-11.266

Figure 2: Yearly figures of the GCW

There has been a constant increase in the need for well-trained professionals over the last few years. Together with the GCW we are realising the Innovatie Werkplaats (IWP) (Innovation Center) Powerful SMEs (Small and medium-sized enterprises) for the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship. Here, two goals of the GCW and the Hanzehogeschool UAS are brought together: educating innovative professionals and finding solutions to problems and challenges in society and everyday professional practice. The GCW acts in this practice as an so called social enterprise.

A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being—this may include maximizing social impact alongside profits for external stakeholders. Social enterprises can be structured as a for-profit or non-profit and can take the form of a cooperative. What differentiates social enterprises is that their social mission is as core to their success as any potential profit.

A business model is a way of analysis and explains how (social) enterprises do their business. Business models as a conceptual tool, seek to explain how value is created. In the case of the GCW, both economic and social values for all stakeholders. This is what we call our new business model.

On behalf of the research group and last but certainly not least all colleagues in the Area Cooperative, we hope to be able to present to you a first understanding of the principles and achievements of the GCW.

Projects of the GCW during the first three years of its existence are shown in figure 3.

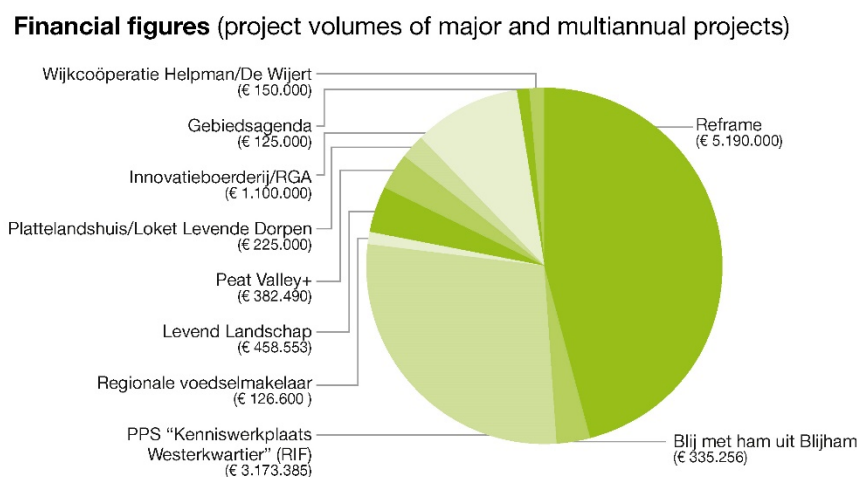


Figure 3: Projects of the GCW

Lessons from Mondragón

Together with honours students of the FEM, we organised an excursion to one of the largest cooperatives in the world: 120 cooperatives, united in one large cooperative umbrella organisation, with a total of over 100,000 owner-employees, located in Arrasate, a village in Spanish Basque country, better known as Mondragón. This cooperative stands out as one of the most successful cooperative businesses in Europe. We had ourselves informed about cooperative basic principles, the legal structures, realisation of a steady growth, and especially about the responsibilities for the goings on of the enterprise, which are felt in the very veins of the organisation.

We went there to learn lessons for the new type of cooperative which have been developed in the north of The Netherlands: the GCW. Not because we think the cooperative would be comparable to the Mondragón Corporación Cooperativa, as the Basque cooperative is officially named. Our goal was to learn which principles could be applied to the newly developed Dutch cooperative model.

We have learned three important lessons from our excursion, partly directly derived from conversations we had with the Mondragón experts, partly as a result of further analysis.

Lesson number one: a cooperative is not an idealist charity organisation, but a social enterprise aimed at making profit. The difference is that profits will be beneficial to all employees, who at the same time are also the owners, instead of profits going directly into the pockets of one owner only. A perfect balance between personal and common interest.

Lesson number two: joining smaller cooperatives into one umbrella structure is an intelligent form of organisation. Not just because it is possible to be flexible in coping with good and bad results. But also because means can be generated for education, research and the joining of personal and common interests.

And finally the third and perhaps most important lesson: one can only achieve one's goals if they learn to co-operate in a new manner with all three partners in the region: the market, authorities and

knowledge institutions. It is possible to be of great significance to each other and to the socio-economic development of the region by being willing and able to continuously learn with and from each other. This process is the main task of the research group with the GCW as a practical case study.

We translated the lessons of Mondragón into three principles: next governance, next business and next education. We will scrutinize and exemplify these principles in this publication by having a good look at the goings on concerning the establishment of the GCW. The cooperative established two types of members within its organisation (figures 4 and 5). A-members are non-profit organisations while B-members are for-profit organisations.

A-members	Translation	Size of the organisation
Landschapsbeheer Groningen	Landscape management Groningen	2.159 Volunteers and 224 citizen participants
Staatsbosbeheer	State Forestry	8.000 hectare in the region
ANV De Eendracht	Agricultural Nature Association De Eendracht	150 members
ANV Boer & Natuur ZWK	Agricultural Nature Association Farmer & Nature Southern Westerkwartier	200 members
Vereniging Duurzame Landbouw Stad en Ommeland	Association sustainable Agriculture of the city of Groningen and its region	230 members, 30 donors
Terra	Agricultural Secondary vocational School	4.290 pupils and 2.184 students
Stichting De Zijlen	Foundation De Zijlen (disability care center)	1.100 clients

Figure 4: A-members of the GCW

B-members	
Cowcept	Coaching company for livestock farmers
De GaveSuper	Regional supermarket
ImProveZ Marketing & communicatie	Marketing & communication company
StreekhoutPlus BV	Company which recycles wood derived from wood maintenance works in the region
Wold en Waard	Local Social Housing Company

Figure 5: B-members of the GCW

NEXT GOVERNANCE

The Cooperative as a new regional model of co-operation

To a new regional chain of economics. More than 250 years after the first cooperatives were established in Great Britain, the cooperative is still a very vibrant form of enterprise. More so, the number of new cooperatives has risen extensively, not only in the Netherlands, but also on a European scale. Since 2010, 173 new cooperatives were started, almost half of the total number of cooperatives. These new cooperatives focus mainly on energy, care, medical, and local amenities.

Some examples:

- creating a fibre-optic network
- joint procurement of (renewable) energy or substantial own production of energy
- procurement of care
- running a local care facility or supermarket in a village
- exploitation of a community centre or developing new functions for vacant social real estate property

All these examples follow the cooperative model as we have known since the establishment of the first cooperatives. There's nothing new, about this, one would say. Or is there? Well, in fact there is! In addition to these well-known cooperatives, we see a whole new kind of cooperative emerging: the Area Cooperative. The first of these regional cooperatives was established in 2013 in the Westerkwartier region. During the next years, other area cooperatives were established throughout the Netherlands.

What distinguishes the GCW from a traditional cooperative? First of all, its members do not come from one single sector. Additionally, they do not have one clearly defined objective. The GCW as a social enterprise with members from the local business community, education and research, government, public organisations and citizens' associations, represent the relevant local stakeholders and together they pursue social and economic well-being and efficacy for the region.

The regional agenda is leading for the fundamental target areas of the GCW. In the northern region of The Netherlands this is the Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3), consisting of four main themes: health and well-being, renewable food and bio based economy, renewable energy, clean and safe water. Connected with this is the Northern Executional Agenda, in which the northern SMEs play a key role. Supported by authorities and educational institutions, it is up to the SMEs to realise innovations. To achieve this, they need to be able to develop and implement relevant knowledge. This requires new public-private co-operation structures, which will stimulate, enhance and accelerate the innovative strength of the region.

The GCW functions as a central hub for all participants in the quadruple helix (sometimes triple helix). Together they initiate programs or large scale projects aimed at a new regional chain economy. The GCW ensures an overall consistency. Because the cooperative brings all relevant participants together, it is able to be the driving force of the regional innovation process. It provides an infrastructure for acquiring, managing and sharing knowledge, facilities and budgets. In a series of expert classes the regional partners have defined their common executive agenda.

Entrepreneurs, education and research, and government are the key players who co-operate with collective organisations and citizens in the GCW. By this co-operation they determine the realisation of well-being and prosperity in their region – within the confines they established together beforehand.

The Netherlands have a long tradition of co-operation between parties from the public, semi-public and commercial domains. For a long time systems of co-operation have been quite non-committal, but due to the just overcome economic crisis there is less money to be shared. To prevent shortages each of the regional partners has to do their bit: give first, take later. This is a learning process for everyone involved.

Entrepreneurs look beyond their own business and profit. They acquire an understanding of long-term common interest, results and increase in value. By co-operating, they offer and receive new knowledge and access to innovation programs and funds.

Education and research play an active role for better employment by acting in a flexible and pushing manner to questions from the region. This can only be done by keeping a good look at the supply and adapt curricula to current changes.

Governments have a new role as active co-thinkers and facilitators. They enable innovations and pave the way to funding. So, not letting things go, but handling issues differently and a different way of handling responsibilities. This new attitude of all actors involved – that is what is meant by 'next governance'.

NEXT BUSINESS

The GCW is working as a regional social enterprise. As we have mentioned earlier, a cooperative is a social enterprise and needs to be self-sufficient. Yet the social goals are not less important than the economic goals. Bringing these two together will only succeed because of the structural co-operation as we have described. Using innovation programs and funding is not conflicting. On the contrary, it is an essential part of the GCW business model. The business outcomes consist of the development of new chains: between people, the products or services they are offering or developing, and their capital in any form.

The IWP Noordhorn: working programs and showcases. Stakeholders of the GCW's regional projects work from the IWP Noordhorn. Here, the learning communities are formed and projects are being prepared and executed. Workshops, debates, and coaching routes are also organised from the IWP. The Innovation Farm Zuidhorn, which will be introduced later, will be the definitive place of settlement for the GCW and its IWP.

Based on RIS3, members of the GCW have developed a working program around four central themes:

Food, landscape, livestock and agriculture

Energy, water and bio based economy

Environment, health and social well-being

Youth and start-ups

As a common subject, the cooperative business model is constantly being renewed, both organizationally and financially. We will exemplify these themes and showcase with a project for each theme.

Food, landscape, livestock and agriculture

Food assurance and sustainable agriculture are main topics on RIS3. The regional production is at a high level, but it mainly concerns bulk production for export. Processing and valorisation are taking place elsewhere, and we partly import what we have exported before, but at a much higher price

than what we sold it for. What if we could bring production and processing back to our region? That would increase our food assurance, contribute to local employment and economy, and reduce CO₂-emission, because transportation would only be local instead of international. In this program we are looking for repairing old and developing new regional chains. From hops to beer, from cow to hamburger, from vegetables to soup – as a manner of speaking.

REFRAME

One of the largest projects in this program is REFRAME, a European cooperation project in Interreg with partners like the West-Flanders region, Vastra Götalan or Oldenburg-Bremen, which the GCW and the research group have developed in cooperation with our lead partner, the town of Groningen. We are classifying supply and demand within the region, and developing new business models based on this and make cooperative deals between supplier and large consumer organizations, such as hospitals and care institutions. We also educate people for a new profession: food intermediary, a reliable link who connects and further develops supply and demand. The research group is responsible for the substantive management, together with other research groups of the Hanzehogeschool Groningen and Hogeschool Inholland.

Living Landscape

One of the GCW's first projects is a project called Living Landscape. The goal is to bring back 100 kilometres of windbreaks in the Westerkwartier region back to being well-managed. But that is not all. In 2016 the Common Agriculture Policy and the agricultural nature and landscape management will be overhauled. Through Living Landscape the GCW with its stakeholders will have the opportunity to develop a practical management policy for the area. A simple and effective policy which will keep and improve the quality of the boscape.

Energy, water and bio based economy

There is a growing demand to translate renewability into practical tools and methods. This way collective and business interests are connected to the regional value-economy. This is also important for entrepreneurs in the GCW. The cooperative and its IWP are located at the business area Mokkenburg in Noordhorn.

The entrepreneurs of this business area have started having their businesses scrutinized with the Environmental Barometer. What is the environmental impact of these businesses in their present form and how can environmental improvement be achieved?

Successful application of renewable energy complex. It must be made sure that energy can be generated, stored and be available at the right moment in its right form as end energy at the right location. Yet another aspect is important: our behaviour and the choices we make for using that end energy. These issues are the main themes at the IWP Noordhorn and can be put into practise in conjunction with the entrepreneurs at the Mokkenburg business area.

From pruning materials to medicine and cosmetics

Led by the research group of Transition to bio-economy, the GCW is doing research to use pruning materials as bio mass for the production of pharmaceutical and cosmetically ingredients. Urban vegetation contributes to quality of life for citizens and biological diversity in their surroundings. Pruning materials yield biomass that can be processed into fertilizer and raw material for medication and cosmetics, with a residual valorisation for bio-energy. The circle is completed if planting and maintaining high quality urban vegetation can be financed by valorisation of the pruning materials.

Living environment, health and social well-being

Co-operation between citizens and authorities has fundamentally changed over the last few years. Citizens speak for themselves and are competent. They can and want to influence the future of their own surroundings. At the same time there are concerns about falling behind, school dropouts, unemployment and health problems. If left to their own devices, some groups of people would be caught between a rock and a hard place.

The GCW is working on an overall connecting approach for healthy living in the urban field. It could be summarized as Healthy Region – a practical approach for innovative and sustainable solutions concerning care, health and well-being. Paramount are connections between different policy domains, which all contribute to healthy living in a city and rural areas. The main question is what new roles and responsibilities will emerge for citizens, civil servants and professionals from these working areas and how this will affect the curricula of the educational institutions involved.

One of the showcases, Innovation Farm Zuidhorn, is executed in conjunction with the Zuidhorn municipality and the Groningen-Assen region. Many citizens, municipalities and social organisations do not know what to do with their vacant real estate. Especially in contracting regions, where schools have to close and farmers can no longer keep their businesses, this is a problem. It is not easy to get private people to rent a monumental school building or a farm. The buildings are there and have to be maintained or torn down, which will lead to extra expenses or even social disturbance.

The process that was initiated in our innovation farm shows how this problem can be tackled, and in such way that it adds social value and can be profitable for business. The object is a dilapidated 17th century farm in Zuidhorn, which will be renovated and re-used. The farm will be transformed into a knowledge and innovation workplace for the region, a living and learning lab for all parties concerned: education and research, business, social organisations, and authorities. All partners can meet here and together develop innovative cross-overs.

From the start, the innovation farm will function as a knowledge and innovation workplace. Students from different schools and levels and unemployed people from the region, together with teachers, coaches and external experts will start the renovation and develop concepts for use and exploitation of the farm.

Youth and start-ups

Rural areas will invariably have to deal with demographic changes: an ageing population and young people leaving the area, because of the decline of the agricultural function. Both are a threat to regional innovation potential, competitive strength, employment potential, social participation and chances for a solid and differentiated supply of education. Young people will suffer the consequences. For their higher education, they have to move to larger cities. Many of them would like to return to their region of birth. But in order to do that, there should be jobs available. Due to a shortage of available jobs that require their – oftentimes – high qualifications, many youngsters move to the western parts of the country – a brain drain for the peripheral areas in the north of The Netherlands.

A group of bachelor and master students of the Hanzehogeschool Groningen and RUG (University of Groningen) with youth workers have established the start-up NE(X)TWORK. They aim to stimulate and support their young colleagues in the region in finding jobs and establishing their own start-ups. This way, they create their own employment. They have a realistic view, in order not to primarily think of immediate and quick economic effects. Nevertheless, they wish to contribute to these effects in the long run. Demographics, employment, care and liveability are just as important

to them as reachability, nature, landscape and environment at local, regional and superregional levels.

Recently, they were invited by to present their business plan at an international conference of the INTERREG 5B program in Goteborg, as a prelude to developing a cooperative project on this subject.

IWP Helpman-De Wijert

The municipal authorities working together with citizens and schools in a city district – it is not that special any longer. People are taking the initiative to improve their surroundings more and more. The partners of the IWP Helpman-De Wijert are going far beyond that. In the Groningen city districts of Helpman and De Wijert they are experimenting with a new form of cooperation: Neighbourhood Cooperative. This project was initiated by Terra MBO (polytechnic), one of the partners in the GCW. Hanzehogeschool Groningen has joined in recently. The school has combined forces with the district residents, entrepreneurs and the housing corporation. Together they are giving new energy to both districts.

The authorities are doing more than merely supporting the initiative. They are actively co-operating, but without deciding what needs to be done. The main objective is to bring together the knowledge, talents, and strength of students, teachers, entrepreneurs and residents in the district. The school is virtually moving into the district. Residents and entrepreneurs are being taught together with students, not just in a classroom school setting, but right in the middle of their own district, aimed at subjects they can benefit from. There are several projects in which students are going to work to help smarten up and improve their neighbourhood.

NEXT EDUCATION

From experiment to a working structure within the GCW. During the past two years the Institute of FEM of the Hanzehogeschool have strengthened their co-operation with the GCW. This co-operation was shaped by establishing a joint research group called Sustainable Cooperative Enterprise.

Through the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship of the Hanzehogeshool the involvement of schools has been further developed in the IWP Powerful SMEs. By means of the GCW, universities, academies and polytechnics can intensify their relations with SMEs, local and regional authorities, and social organisations. This benefits SMEs, which improves contacting knowledge institutions and makes it easier for them to contact experts and students who can help them. On the other hand, schools benefit by being able to connect their knowledge and expertise to the daily practise of businesses.

The IWP Powerful SMEs builds on the structure of the IWP and functions as a linking structure between education and research on one side and regional partners in business, social organisations and government on the other side. Business professionals may often have complaints about not being able to find the right person in universities and schools. By going through the IWP, this problem will be resolved and professionals will almost automatically be brought into contact with the right people.

In the co-operation between Hanzehogeschool Groningen, Terra MBO and the GCW, all parties are cross-represented: staff and students from schools in the regions and staff from the GCW in the schools. This allows partners to prepare and execute interesting projects for practical research. These projects combine several results:

- answering questions from local entrepreneurs
- offering an authentic, rich and challenging learning environment to learning and co-

- operating communities of students, teachers and professionals
- generate added value to the region

Learning and innovating communities

In the IWP Powerful SMEs educational institutions are working together with regional stakeholders. Within each project and the IWP as a whole the intention to learn and innovate is at the centre. Therefore, partners are often called COIL: a 'community of innovative learners'. This benefits all parties:

Schools and universities do not constantly have to start looking for businesses that may have a question which would fit the curriculum

SMEs do not have to shop around at several schools and universities, looking for that one expert that might just be able to answer their question – perhaps no sooner than the next academic year. For both parties it means that they do not have to jump from one project to another, but they can work together with all stakeholders from a shared multiannual agenda and executive programs, of course with some required flexibility. This way, they can really add value to the region.

Between 2014 and 2016 a total of 800 participants have attended more than 40 seminars. In order to answer all questions from the region, the intensive co-operation within the Hanzehogeschool is being expanded from FEM to other economics schools and their research groups involved in the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship by means of the IWP Powerful SMEs.

About the research group of Sustainable Cooperative Enterprise

In 2014 Terra MBO took the initiative to establish a research group under the responsibility of the transition manager, Willem Foorthuis. In 2015 the research group and professor were accommodated by the Hanzehogeschool Groningen, as requested by the regional stakeholders. There, the research group was formalised as of the academic year 2015/2016, named Sustainable Cooperative Enterprise. It has been linked to the existing research group of Sustainable Financial Management and is part of the Institute of Financial Management and the Marian van Os Centre for Entrepreneurship.

At the moment there are discussions going on to achieve a tripartite-agreement between Terra, Hanzehogeschool Groningen and the GCW in which Terra will participate in the research group. Thus, the research capacity from the HBO is connected to the practical knowledge in the MBO. The professor will be the link between the schools and work floors in all stakeholder organisations and will provide the link between knowledge creation and application.

Cooperative entrepreneurship

The research group is substantively aimed at practical research into cooperative entrepreneurship. Young researchers will be helped and supported in their research, to gain a better understanding in regional cooperative chains. In every theme of the GCW working program such cooperative chains can be found, e.g. food chains, or care and energy chains, and last but not least chains and circuits in the circular economy.

But the cooperative model itself also requires new and reliable chains: between different partner organisations, the people involved, and the shareholders in the region. The research group contributes to the development of socially responsible, social, sustainable, and regionally based entrepreneurship with new responsibilities and opportunities for regional shareholders. This research focuses on a new understanding of financial and social results. In addition to that, attention

will be paid to the development of cooperative management, finance and income models.

Research programs 2016/2017

Eight research programs within the Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier

In the current academic year the research program consists of eight themes. These are themes which are currently important to the north of The Netherlands, which can be linked to RIS3 and NIA and are of importance in a European context as well. As far as possible, projects that will be worked on have also been listed with each theme.

By doing research at a thematic level as well as at a business specific level, students, entrepreneurs, schools and the region may benefit from this research. This is the best way to stimulate the objective of learning communities and a learning region. The positive results of the combination between research and business is emerging in the third year of the existence of the cooperative (figure 6).

(Research) students

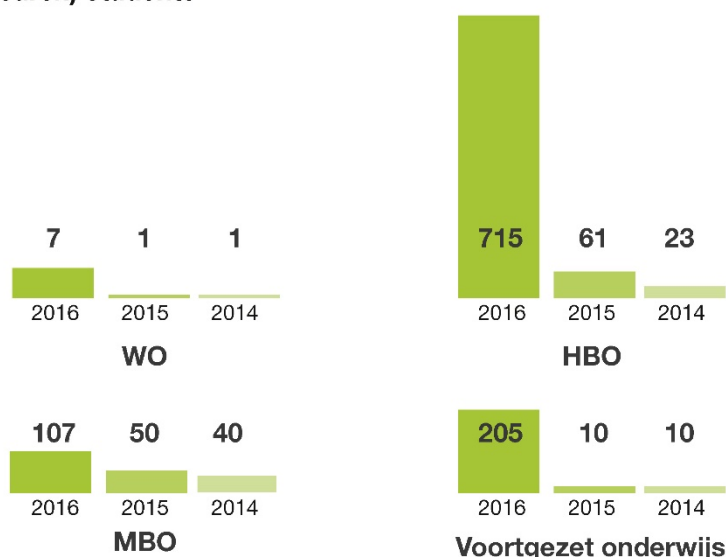


Figure 6: Annual number of research students, concerning Master, Bachelor and Vocational level, participating in the GCW-projects.

Research within the cooperative is focussing on several research topics (figure 7).

Theme	Innovation question
Regional food chain	Building the food chain in the region, cooperative switching between supply and demand and smart specialisations for entrepreneurs
New cooperative working methods and renewal of control and administration	New organisational structures, business models and administration, based on a social cost-benefit analysis and introduction ERP
Sustainable building	Transition to sustainable/energy-effective/future-proof building for contractors and promoters in the building column/(innovation farm)

Healthy Region (care, health and healthy ageing)	New concepts for health and care by professionals and citizens at local level, specific points of attention, new income models at local scale, activating local talent and professionalising volunteers
Biobased and circular economy	New opportunities for using crop and residual streams from agriculture and using food industry for non-food applications
Social real estate	New functions and innovative re-valorisation for vacant social real estate with social value
Energy transition and renewability	Transition to smart grid and energy cooperative on a business area site (Mokkenburg)
Smart farming	Precision agriculture and smart soil improvement, e.g. by using sensor technology and drones

Figure 7: Research topics of the GCW

In the wake of the GC's success, and in addition to the GCW (ca. 900 entrepreneurs), the Gebiedscoöperatie Southwest Drenthe (ca. 900 entrepreneurs) and the District Cooperative Helpman/De Wijert (City of Groningen) have joined in. By means of a number of the research group's projects, including the European cooperative project REFRAME, new initiatives will join the research group, such as the Genossenschaft Berne 2020 in German Niedersachsen. With this, more than 2,000 entrepreneurs have a potential connection to the educational field. Several seminars are organised yearly to create a physical connection between the stakeholders as well (figure 8).

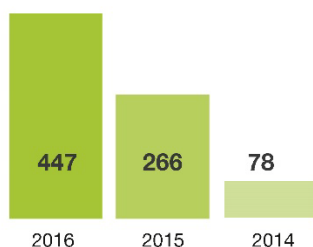


Figure 8: Annual number of participants of seminars organised by the GCW.

The progress in the GCW have been considered very inspiring by both educational institutions and entrepreneurs. Preparations are being made to roll out this working method into the east of the province of Groningen. It is to be expected that this model will be introduced into other regions as well.

The GCW will in the future, within the principles of cooperation, reflect a combination of business development, social enterprise and a commitment to develop as well the social environment of the region Westerkwartier and other rural and urban regions in the northern part of the Netherlands. This all without ignoring the tension between economic and social values and emphasizing the role of new business models.