TRANSMISSION BELT
FOR THE GREEN VOICE OF YOUTH

A Single-Case Study on the representativeness and professionalisation of the *Jonge Klimaatbeweging* (JKB)

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1. INTRODUCTION

What started in the summer of 2018 with just one young girl in Sweden who skipped school in order to protest against climate change, grew out to become one of the largest protests ever organised on a global scale. The then 15-years-old Greta Thunberg, pitied and bemused by passersby at first as she sat outside her country's parliament building (Watts, 2019), turned out to become an icon in the younger generation's battle against climate change. The year 2019 is now known for its record high number of climate strikes, with major events taking place every single month of the year as people – and in particular students – took to the streets to fight for a more sustainable future (Bir, 2019).

The outcry by youth on the topic of climate change sparks a different debate that has thus far remained mainly in the background, namely one on *youth representation and participation*, and the reason for that is not at all that far-fetched. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of the '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change requests the participating nation states to include "a time frame up to 2030" in their nationally determined contributions (UNFCCC, 2015), and the focal point of the European Green Deal is the 'aim to be climate-neutral by the year 2050' (European Commission, 2017). Each and every one of these so-called climate goals are set by (supra) national bodies for the future, meaning that the decisions and policies of today are and should be made in consideration of how they will impact us and our environment on a long-term basis.

However, the results of the decisions made in terms of climate change, aiming at a more sustainable future, will have the biggest impact on the younger generations of today (O'Brien, Selboe & Hayward, 2018). It is for that reason that the cry for more and better *inclusiveness* of youth is understandable, but along that line of reasoning also lies a paradox. If young people

are the ones with the highest stakes in the matter, then why is it that the majority of this group does not seem to be *engaged* when it comes to the topic of climate policy making (Hibberd & Nguyen, 2013; Corner et al., 2015; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020)? Granted, movements such as the school strikes for climate instigated by Greta Thunberg drew out millions of young people to the streets around the world, but there remains a silent majority of young people that sits idly by (Corner et al., 2015, pp. 524-525; Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2020, p. 21). This begs the question of how youth can then be represented and included at all in the face of seeming disinterest and indifference.

In order to tackle that problem, a number of youth organisations in the Netherlands joined forces in 2016 by launching an initiative under the name '*Jonge Klimaatbeweging*' or JKB[1] for short (Jonge Klimaatbeweging, 2016), with the aim of increasing youth participation whilst also advocating a larger role for youth in the making of climate policy. This initiative has since grown significantly and now serves as an umbrella organisation that unites the voices of more than 70 youth organisations[2] in the Netherlands – and their members, adding up to a total of more than 100.000 young people – at a local, national, and more recently also at an international level (Jonge Klimaatbeweging, 2019). Already within two years after its official launch, the Dutch government seemingly sought to include the interests of Dutch youth in the drafting up of its National Climate Agreement, by reaching out to the JKB and giving them two seats at the negotiating table along with other major actors (i.e. the private sector, labour unions, NGOs, CSOs) (Klimaatberaad, 2018). Hereafter, the JKB has been invited to speak and collaborate with top-ranking government officials on several occasions. Moreover, together with a few other youth organisations, it has also managed to secure a fixed seat for youth at the

[1] The English name for '*Jonge Klimaatbeweging*' (JKB) is Youth Climate Movement NL.
[2] For a list of the affiliated youth organisations, see the JKB annual report of 2019 (Jonge Klimaatbeweging, 2019b, p. 7)

table within each of the 30 regions in the Netherlands that are concerned with implementing the so-called Regional Energy Strategies or RESs (Nationaal Programma RES, 2021).

While the inclusion of youth in this manner by the Dutch national and local governments on such an important matter is certainly commendable, it does raise an interesting question: How did a fairly new youth organisation earn itself a seat at a high-level negotiating table in such a relatively short amount of time? It could of course simply have been a case of so-called 'gesture politics', a type of symbolism showcasing the Dutch government's goodwill towards youth and a recognition of their interests, but ultimately not resulting in policy output that is representative of those interests. However, this does not necessarily have to be the answer to the above question. If we were to treat the JKB not merely as a youth organisation, but rather as a civil society organisation (CSO) *of*, *by* and *for* youth, aimed at connecting their constituents with policy makers, then another possibility reveals itself.

Recent literature on the capacity of CSOs to present themselves as intermediary interest groups that can amass and relay policy-relevant information between society and policy makers has stressed the importance of a balance between *membership involvement* and *organisational capacity*. This balance, when achieved, has come to be known as an ideal-type or effective *transmission belt function* (Albareda, 2018; Albareda & Braun, 2019). With the Dutch government inviting the JKB to fulfil the role of intermediary that serves as a representative body for youth in the Netherlands (Klimaatberaad, 2018) that can translate their interests into policy-relevant information, the JKB is seemingly already assumed to possess the organisational structure necessary to effectively function as a transmission belt. The question then remains: does it really, or was the invitation from the Dutch government indeed a form of gesture politics?

In order to test the above assumption and to rule out gesture politics as a possible alternative explanation for the JKB's receiving of a seat at the table, this thesis will investigate

how well the JKB manages balancing the inclusion and representation of its constituents on the one hand, and the professionalisation of its organisational capacity on the other hand. As such, the main research question this study tries to answer is as follows: '*In how far does the JKB function as an effective transmission belt*?' To that end, I propose a single-case study focused on the JKB and I provide the reader with an empirical content analysis of documentation as well as participant observations within the confines of a theoretical framework based on the two organisational dimensions introduced by Albareda (2018): member involvement and organisational capacity.

As the intermediary role of interest groups remains an understudied phenomenon to date (Albareda & Braun, 2019), existing literature has thus far not yet studied the extent to which civil society *youth* organisations can properly function as effective transmission belts. Considering the high stakes for youth globally in the climate crisis, this thesis thus tries to argue that this relatively rare case of the JKB may serve as a benchmark for youth organisations around the world that are attempting to more actively engage in the making of climate policies on a national level. It furthermore aims to contribute to the ongoing academic debate by attempting to provide new insights on the transmission belt function as part of the democratic process of policy making.

The thesis proceeds as follows: first the Theoretical Framework will review the relevant academic literature and draws from it the variables of *representativeness* and *professionalisation* in order to measure the levels of youth involvement and organisational capacity, which together constitute a transmission belt. Subsequently, the variables are used to formulate the hypotheses. Then, the Research Design provides the conceptualisations of the variables, introduces the case, explains the method of data collection and finally operationalises the variables through the use of six different indicators. The forth chapter takes the reader through the analyses of different types of documentation and participant observations and

concludes with a presentation of the results. Finally, the Conclusion summarises the study's main objective and findings, and puts forward a discussion of the limitations and their implications for the research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main aim of this thesis is to investigate the extent to which the JKB pulls off the 'balancing act' (Albareda, 2018) of both the aggregating of the varying interests of Dutch youth, as well as the relaying of those interests in the form of policy-relevant information to policy makers (Albareda & Braun, 2019). The Introduction of this study explains that a civil society organisation (CSO) that manages to achieve this balance between representation and professionalisation functions as an effective transmission belt (Albareda, 2018). This thesis treats the JKB as a CSO *of*, *by* and *for* youth. Therefore, this chapter will first briefly elaborate upon what constitutes a CSO and explain how the JKB as a youth organisation meets the criteria that allow it to be treated as such. Then, it will continue by pulling the two organisational dimensions of the transmission belt function – member involvement and organisational capacity – into the broader debate on respectively *representativeness* and *professionalisation*. Finally, this chapter introduces the variables and hypotheses deducing them from the key constructs drawn from the literature review below.

2.1 JKB as CSO

This section provides the reader with the most common definition of what is understood to be a civil society organisation (CSO). According to the generally used definitions of the organisational type, a CSO is an interest group on a not-for-profit and voluntary basis that is completely independent from the State. It is an independent actor on a local, national or international level and active in fields varying from "poverty reduction and emergency aid" to "human rights, the environment and more" (United Nations Civil Society Unit, n.d.; European Commission, n.d.). The European Union's online gateway to EU Law, 'EUR-Lex', describes a CSO as "an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a

democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens" (EUR-Lex, n.d.). Examples of such organisations are said to include "social partners (trade unions and employers' groups); non-governmental organisations (e.g. for environmental and consumer protection); and grassroots organisations (e.g. youth and family groupings)" (EUR-Lex, n.d.).

The JKB is a youth organisation – made up of young volunteers only – that aims to increase youth participation whilst also advocating a larger role for youth in the making of climate policy. It furthermore attempts to act as an intermediary between the interests of its support base on the one hand and policy makers' demand for representative policy input on the other. It does so by trying to translate those interests into policy-relevant information and relaying it to public officials in the policy-making arenas. In so doing, the JKB meets all of the commonly recognised criteria that allow it to be treated as a CSO. Important to note here is that Albareda excluded organisations that did not have any members in his study on the capacity of CSOs to function as transmission belts (2018, p. 1221). However, while the JKB may not have its own direct membership base, other than the members of the organisations it represents as an umbrella organisation, I argue in this study that this lack of members should not necessarily inhibit an organisation's capacity to function as a transmission belt. This argument is further elaborated upon in the next section of this chapter below.

2.2 The Transmission Belt Function

The previous section explains that an organisation effectively functions as a transmission belt when it manages to keep a sufficient balance between the two organisational dimensions of *member involvement* and *organisational capacity*. To elaborate, such an organisation must both allow for and effectuate active member participation on the one hand, and possess the organisational features that ensure they can "efficiently generate, process, and transfer

information from members to policy makers" on the other hand (Albareda, 2018, pp. 1218-1219). Simply put, an organisation functioning adequately as a transmission belt has to ensure that its constituents' interests are properly aggregated and subsequently articulated to policy makers.

To this end, an organisation is in need of both a high level of representativeness (i.e. active member involvement) as well as the internal capability (i.e. organisational capacity) to connect with and relay relevant information to policy makers (Albareda, 2018). In terms of the former, Albareda (2018) uses the items *interaction*, *decision making* and *local chapters* and operationalises them in order to measure the level of member involvement (p. 1221). In terms of the latter, the items *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation* are used and operationalised in order to measure the level of organisational capacity (Albareda, 2018, p. 1221). This thesis, however, uses a somewhat more extensive approach to measure the two constructs as I will explain in the two sub-sections below. Furthermore, this study recognises the assumption that organisational capacity is compatible with having active stakeholder involvement (Albareda, 2018, p. 1219), contrary to the argument made in the existing literature on the concept of professionalisation which suggests that a focus on organisational capacity inevitably has a negative influence on (the degree of) stakeholder involvement (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013; Maloney, 2015).

2.2.1 Youth Involvement

The first half of the transmission belt is the construct of member involvement. According to Albareda (2018), successfully investing in an organisational structure that allows for the active involvement of their membership base can ensure CSOs' representativeness. In order to measure (the degree of) member involvement, his study proposes three so-called 'items' in the form of *interaction*, *decision making* and *local chapters*. This thesis adheres to a similar

approach and thus draws heavily from Albareda's theoretical framework, albeit on a different scope and in a slightly different context.

The first aspect in terms of member involvement in this thesis that deviates from the work outlined in Albareda's study is the scope of relevant actors. Whereas Albareda looks at the opportunities for participation of *members* only (2018, pp. 1218-1219), this thesis goes beyond this scope in line with what is expressed in an advice of the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands[3] on the making of Collective Labour Agreements[4] (SER, 2013). In the advice, the importance of a broad support base for such agreements that goes *beyond* the membership base alone is underlined in the case of labour unions that represent employers and employees within their respective sectors (SER, 2013, p. 17). The Dutch Council for Public Administration acknowledged a similar approach by arguing for an improvement of the substantive representativeness of society as a whole in the National Climate Agreement negotiations (ROB, 2020, p. 54).

This thesis applies the same logic to the JKB, as it does not have its own direct membership base to begin with, other than the members of the organisations it represents as an umbrella organisation. Moreover, when regarding the JKB as a CSO functioning as an effective transmission belt, it should not only represent the interests of its constituents in the climate debate, but those of Dutch youth in general considering they all have an equal stake in a sustainable future. Therefore, rather than looking at member involvement only, this thesis widens the scope and aims to measure (the degree of) *youth involvement* in general.

Widening the scope from 'members only' to 'youth in general' also has implications for the tools necessary to measure (the degree of) involvement. The three items mentioned above -

[3] "The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands ('*De Sociaal-Economische Raad*' or SER for short in Dutch) is an advisory body in which employers, employees and independent experts (Crown-appointed members) work together" (SER, n.d.).

[4] 'Collective Labour Agreement' is a rough translation from the Dutch world '*Collectieve Arbeidsovereenkomst*' or CAO for short. It is a collective agreement between employers (or employers' organisations) and trade unions about wages and other conditions of employment (Business.gov.nl, n.d.).

interaction, *decision making* and *local chapters* – are sufficient to measure in how far an organisation 'ensures representativeness' by looking at the extent to which it presents opportunities for the aggregation of its membership base's interests (Albareda, 2018, p. 1216). However, in order to gauge the active engagement of a part of society that goes beyond the membership base alone, the discussion needs to be drawn into the broader debate on *representativeness*. Braun (2016, p. 41) argues that, in general, all existing forms of representativeness provided throughout the ongoing scholarly debate on the concept can be led back to the four 'separate yet interconnected' dimensions of representativeness described and defined by Pitkin (1967). These four dimensions are described as *formalistic representativeness*, *descriptive representativeness*, *substantive representativeness*, and *symbolic representativeness* (Braun, 2016; Pitkin, 1967).

The first form, *formalistic representativeness*, is concerned with the rules and processes on the basis of which the representatives are chosen. Specifically, it looks at in how far there are mechanisms that ensure that those represented are involved in the process of appointing or installing a body that represents their interests, as well as mechanisms that ensure that those representatives can be held accountable (Braun, 2016, pp. 41-42).

Descriptive representativeness, the second form, looks at whether resembling features or qualities can be discerned between the representatives and the represented. These features can take a somewhat more functional form such as educational background or occupation, as well as a somewhat more social form such as gender, ethnicity or political preference (Braun, 2016, p. 42). Whereas this second form mainly focuses on 'seeming' representation – that is, the degree to which those represented can recognise their own respective features in the representative body – the concept of *substantive representativeness* concerns itself with 'actual' representation.

Substantive representativeness looks at how well representatives truly act in the interests of the represented. Simply put, it gauges whether that which representatives say and do is consistent with what the represented want them to say and do (Braun, 2016, p. 42). This type of 'actual' representation thus exhibits the extent to which representatives allow for the active involvement of its support base and their interests.

Finally, the fourth form is *symbolic representativeness*. Other than the 'formal, seeming and actual' types of representation, this last dimension touches upon the level of 'perceived' representation. In other words, it focuses more on whether those represented *feel* they are being effectively and fairly represented rather than focusing on whether this is actually the case (Braun, 2016, p. 42). As previously stated, the four separate dimensions are interconnected. Meaning that, in order to effectuate seeming representation (*descriptive*) and translate it into actual representation (*substantive*), good functioning formal forms of representation (*formalistic*) are necessary (Braun, 2016, p. 44). The expectation, then, is that this will ideally lead to an improved perception of representation (*symbolic*). However, of the different forms of representativeness, the fourth and last form is the only type that is completely external to the structure of an organisation. For instance, an organisation can have a fully democratic design (i.e. formally, seemingly and actually representative) and still be perceived as unrepresentative. Therefore, *symbolic representativeness* will not be considered in measuring the degree of youth involvement in this thesis.

Considering the above conceptualisations of the different forms of representativeness, it becomes clear that the three items of *interaction*, *decision making* and *local chapters* as introduced by Albareda (2018) alone are insufficient to use for the purpose of ensuring an organisation's overall representative capabilities. The operationalisations of the above items are solely concerned with testing whether or not an organisation presents its support base with ample opportunities for active involvement. As such, it well serves the purpose of examining

the *substantive representativeness* of an organisation, but neglects testing the remaining types necessary to truly ensure an organisation's overall representativeness. Therefore, by widening the scope of Albareda's (2018) original organisational dimension of member involvement to youth involvement, as well as by drawing this dimension into the broader debate on representativeness, this thesis attempts to fill an existing gap in the literature on stakeholder involvement as part of the transmission belt function.

2.2.2 Organisational Capacity

The second half of the transmission belt is the construct of organisational capacity. Albareda (2018) explains that the conceptualisation of this construct "highly relies and speaks to the idea of professionalisation" (p. 1219). In order to measure (the degree of) organisational capacity, his study sets out the three 'items' in the form of *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation* that jointly indicate the level of professionalisation an organisation has acquired. As opposed to the concept of youth involvement, here the concept of organisational capacity and the indicators used to measure it are drawn from Albareda's theoretical framework as is and – after some changes to the operationalisation – are applied to this study.

Throughout the existing body of literature, many definitions for the concept of *professionalisation* are proposed by a variety of scholars. For instance, a professionalised organisation can be characterised by "a leadership devoting themselves on a full-time basis to their duties; a limited or no membership base; and attempts to represent potential constituents as well as to influence policy makers" (Zald & McCarthy, as cited in Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 187). Furthermore, such organisations may also be characterised as being "bureaucratically organised and staffed by lobbyists, scientists, lawyers and communication experts" (Jordan & Maloney, and Maloney, as cited in Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 187).

In their study on the concept, Klüver & Saurugger (2013) define professionalisation as "the creation of positions, which require a high degree of qualification in terms of training and relevant working experience" (Kubicek & Welter, as cited in Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 193). In order to gauge the level of professionalisation, they derive three indicators from previous academic studies on the concept in the form of *frequency of additional trainings offered by interest groups*, *length of relevant working experience of interest group employees* and *education level of interest group staff* (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 194).

While these indicators can certainly provide clear insights into the level of an organisation's professionalisation, the focus in their study is exclusively put on the personal capacities of the individuals (i.e. the staff or employees), which are then added up to jointly indicate the overall degree of professionalism that exists within the organisation (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 194). There are two main reasons why these specific means of measuring professionalism are not suitable for the focal area of this thesis.

First of all, the indicators such as 'working experience' and 'education level' may not be applicable in the case of youth organisations, as the volunteers that make up these organisations often have not yet (or only recently) reached a level that would qualify them as being professional. Second, an effective transmission belt relies on the capacity of the organisational structure to foster a professionalised environment within which volunteers (or staff, or employees) can efficiently generate, process, and transfer policy-relevant information (Albareda, 2018), rather than regarding the degree of professionalisation as the sum of the individual capacities of all volunteers. Therefore, in order establish the level of professionalisation of the JKB, its organisational capacity will be measured through the use of the indicators *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation* as outlined by Albareda (2018).

The first indicator, *autonomy*, looks at in how far the leadership of an organisation enjoys so-called discretionary authority, which allows it to quickly respond to changes in the policy-making arenas the organisation is active in (King, Felin & Whetten, 2010). Autonomy allows the leadership to more efficiently make decisions and ensures it has the delegated power to do so on behalf of the entire organisation and its constituents (Albareda, 2018, p. 1219).

The second indicator, *centralisation*, is concerned with the question of whether the power to take and implement decisions, establish positions and define strategies lies with the organisation's leadership (i.e. a centralised structure) or instead gives leeway to so-called 'mid-managers' in the organisation (i.e. a decentralised structure) (Albareda, 2018, pp. 1219, 1221).

Finally, the third indicator of *functional differentiation* refers to the division of labour within an organisation and the distribution of tasks over different units, committees or working groups (Albareda, 2018, p. 1219). An organisation that applies functional differentiation can allow "interdependencies to be internalised and research capacity to be generated" (Fraussen & Halpin, as cited in Albareda, 2018, p. 1220).

2.3 Variables & Hypotheses

The main aim of this study is to present the reader with an answer to the question: '*In how far does the JKB function as an effective transmission belt*?' Drawing from the above literature review, this section deduces the variables and hypotheses. As the Introduction of this thesis proposes, the JKB is seemingly already assumed to possess the organisational structure necessary to effectively function as a transmission belt, while it was granted two seats at a high-level negotiating table that was concerned with the making of the Dutch National Climate Agreement and is even now being requested to deliver input as representatives for the vision of youth on climate policies that are still in the making.

Previous research has looked at the effect of organisational design on the access of interest groups to public officials (Albareda & Braun, 2019). However, in the specific case of the JKB, the organisation has already established access. As such, the question is rather whether or not the JKB has gained this access to the negotiating table because it possesses a well-balanced organisational structure that simultaneously ensures youth involvement through representativeness and organisational capacity through professionalisation. Should this indeed be the case, then it can be said that the JKB functions (to a large degree) as an effective transmission belt. Should this not be the case, then the notion of 'gesture politics' as a possible explanation becomes more likely.

In order to rule out the latter possibility, I propose the following two hypotheses in which *negotiating table access* is treated as the dependent variable, and *representativeness* and *professionalisation* as the two independent variables:

H1. *A youth organisation with negotiating table access is more likely to exhibit (a high degree of) representativeness*

H2. *A youth organisation with negotiating table access is more likely to exhibit (a high degree of) professionalisation*

The hypotheses spell out the expectation that an organisation such as the JKB, that already enjoys negotiating table access, should (at least to some degree) possess the qualities that are associated with an effective transmission belt function. These qualities are representative stakeholder involvement and professional organisational capacity. In the next chapter, I first provide a more concrete conceptualisation of the variables, after which I elaborate on the case selection, data collection and mode of analysis.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

As stated in the previous two chapters, the main research question this thesis tries to formulate an answer to is: '*In how far does the JKB function as an effective transmission belt*?' To that end, the theoretical construct has been divided up into two different dimensions in the Theoretical Framework that together constitute an effective transmission belt: youth involvement and organisational capacity. In order to measure the former, the concept of representativeness provides three different indicators in the form of formalistic, descriptive and substantive representativeness. The latter will be measured through the use of the concept of professionalisation, which provides the indicators autonomy, centralisation and functional differentiation. It is expected that an organisation that enjoys access to high-level negotiating tables exhibits (at least a certain degree of) both representative and professional qualities.

In this chapter on the research design, I will first elaborate on the conceptualisation of the key variables of *negotiating table access*, *representativeness* and *professionalisation*. Next, I provide the reader with an explanation of and justification for using the JKB as single case in this study. Finally, the last section of this chapter describes the method of data collection and the data set, and introduces the operationalisation of the key variables through the use of the indicators introduced above.

3.1 Conceptualisation of Variables and Indicators

This section on the conceptualisation of the variables and indicators consists of three parts. First, a short definition of what is meant by *negotiating table access* and an explanation of its use will be provided to the reader. Second, the concept of representativeness is outlined by assigning concrete definitions used specifically in this research for the three indicators *formalistic representativeness*, *descriptive representativeness* and *substantive representativeness*. Third,

the concept of professionalisation is delineated through the provision of concrete definitions for the three indicators *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation*.

3.1.1 Negotiating Table Access

In this thesis, the concept of *negotiating table access* refers to the opportunity to actively participate in democratic processes of deliberation (Benhabib, 1996; Braun, 2016; Cohen, 1997; Fishkin, 1991, 2009; Lafont, 2015). In other words, actors in the form of interest groups or organisations that are presented with the opportunity to deliver input and shape output through a process of open debate between different stakeholders are understood to enjoy what this thesis has dubbed *negotiating table access*.

Existing research has measured the influence of certain aspects of organisational design as independent variables on '(the degree of) interest group access' as the dependent variable. More elaborately, it investigated how the levels of decision-making procedures, functional differentiation, representativeness and membership type influenced the level of access to administrative and political officials (Albareda & Braun, 2019). However, the variable of *negotiating table access* in this study is already a given and thus treated as a constant rather than as something that can exhibit different levels depending on the influence of other variables.

In contrast with the existing literature (Albareda & Braun, 2019), this thesis applies a form of deductive theory testing by reversing the hypotheses. To elaborate, instead of saying independent variable X has an influence on dependent variable Y, this thesis deduces from the Theoretical Framework that the presence of dependent variable Y is positively linked to (high degrees of) independent variables X1 and X2. In this analogy, the dependent variable Y correlates to the concept of *negotiating table access*, X1 to the concept of *representativeness* and X2 to the concept of *professionalisation*. The latter two concepts will be defined in the subsections below.

3.1.2 Representativeness

To test in how far the JKB tries to actively involve all the relevant stakeholders – Dutch youth in the case of the JKB – the concept of representativeness is used. Pitkin (1967) distinguishes between four different types of representativeness, namely *formalistic*, *descriptive*, *substantive* and *symbolic*. As described in the Theoretical Framework, the latter of these forms will not be considered in measuring the degree of youth involvement in this thesis, as it is the only type that is completely external to the structure of an organisation. Therefore, this sub-section will only provide the conceptualisation of the remaining three forms.

Formalistic representativeness is understood in the form of 'institutional arrangements' that indicate in how far there are mechanisms that ensure that those represented are involved in the process of appointing or installing a body that represents their interests, as well as mechanisms that ensure that those representatives can be held accountable (Braun, 2016, pp. 41-42). To put this into the context of the JKB, the organisation is in need of both electoral mechanisms that allow its constituents to democratically authorise representatives to act on their behalf, and mechanisms that ensure accountability and responsiveness of those representatives (Baggott & Jones, 2018, p. 343) in order to attain some degree of formal representation. As the name of the concept implies, these mechanisms need to be formally outlined in an organisation's official documentation that contains its principal rules and regulations.

Descriptive representativeness in this thesis refers to the degree to which resembling features or qualities can be discerned between the representatives and the represented (Braun, 2016, p. 42). That is, if an organisation wants to be seen as being representative (i.e. 'seeming representative') of a certain part of society, then it needs to be a reflection of (ideally) each and every individual or group that constitutes that part of society. Of course, for an organisation to

pull of such an ideal form of representation is highly unlikely, but it is nonetheless important to at least ensure that 'under-representation' is addressed (Baggott & Jones, 2018, p. 344). Therefore, in order to make this concept somewhat more comprehensible, it distinguishes two different types of features an organisation needs to reflect, namely 'functional' and 'social' features (Braun, 2016, p. 42). The former translates into indicators such as occupation or educational background, whereas the latter can be characterised by indicators such as gender, ethnicity or political preference.

Substantive representativeness here entails how well representatives truly act in the interests of their constituents, or simply put whether that which representatives say and do is consistent with what their constituents want them to say and do (Braun, 2016, p. 42). In other words, this type of 'actual' representation looks at the specific actions an organisation takes and the opportunities it presents (Baggott & Jones, 2018, p. 345) to allow for active stakeholder involvement that paves the way for effective aggregation and subsequent translation of interests. As such, an organisation can be said to be truly representative (i.e. 'actual representative') when (1) it grants their constituents certain platforms where they can interact with each other and the organisation's leadership (e.g. a general assembly, an online forum, etc.) and uses these platforms of deliberation to gather input that is representative of its constituents; and (2) it translates this input into policy-relevant information which it can then articulate to policy makers, political and administrative officials, and other actors in the policy-making process.

The advantage of using the concept of representation and its different models as defined by Pitkin (1967) is that it has been applied by many scholars to a wide scope of varying academic research. Yet, despite all the different theoretical applications of the concept, there remains a broad consensus in terms of its definition, the interpretation of this definition, and the implications of this interpretation throughout time (for some examples, see: Baggott & Jones, 2018; Bird, 2012; Braun, 2016; Hayes & Hibbing, 2016; Klenk, Reed, Lidestav & Carlsson,

2013). This consensus forms a firm basis for the justification of using the above definitions as the conceptualisation of representativeness as key variable in this study.

3.1.3 Professionalisation

Examining in how far the JKB possesses the organisational capacity to "efficiently generate, process, and transfer information from members to policy makers" (Albareda, 2018, pp. 1218-1219) will be done through the use of the concept of professionalisation. As the Theoretical Framework highlights, an effective transmission belt relies on the capacity of the organisational structure rather than on individual capacities of those who make up the organisation. This notion is endorsed by King et al. (2010), who argue that an organisation rises above the sum of its individuals and should in and on itself be regarded as an actor responsible to the larger society (p. 298). Therefore, in line with the study of Albareda (2018), this thesis will measure professionalisation by assessing (the levels of) the indicators *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation*. In this sub-section, the conceptualisation of each of these indicators will be provided.

Autonomy here is used as the degree to which the leadership of an organisation – in this specific case the executive board of the JKB – enjoys so-called discretionary authority, which allows it to quickly respond to changes in the policy-making arenas the organisation is active in (King, Felin & Whetten, 2010). In other words, it allows the leadership to more efficiently make decisions and ensures it has the delegated power to do so on behalf of the entire organisation and its constituents (Albareda, 2018, p. 1219). By defining it as "the capacity of the [organisation] to take human resource management decisions – specifically on budgetary issues and hiring staff – by itself" (Albareda, 2018, p. 1222), Albareda provides a measurable interpretation of the concept.

Centralisation as an indicator in this thesis looks at whether the power to take and implement decisions, establish positions and define strategies lies with the organisation's leadership (i.e. a centralised structure) or instead gives leeway to so-called 'mid-managers' in the organisation (i.e. a decentralised structure) (Albareda, 2018, pp. 1219, 1221; Damanpour, 1991). According to Albareda, it captures the degree to which the leadership of the CSO – here the executive board of the JKB – is influential both when establishing [political] positions as well as when deciding on advocacy and lobbying tactics (2018, p. 1222). Simply put, a high degree of influence on the position and strategies of the organisation from the part of the executive board is indicative of a high level of centralisation, which consequently contributes to a more professionalised organisational environment.

Functional differentiation, the last of the indicators introduced in this chapter, has already very briefly – but explicitly – been described in the Theoretical Framework as the division of labour within an organisation and the distribution of tasks over different units, committees or working groups (Albareda, 2018, pp. 1219-1220; Klüver, 2012, p. 496). Furthermore, the concept has also been used as a means to measure "the number of different occupational specialties or specialised units at a given hierarchical level" (Fioretti & Bauke, as cited in Albareda, 2018, p. 1220). Therefore, in the case of the JKB, the concept will be used to gauge (the degree of) functional differentiation that can be observed within the organisation at different hierarchical levels.

Here as well, the main advantage in using indicators established, used and recognised in recent academic literature (for some examples, see: Albareda, 2018; Albareda & Braun, 2019; Klüver, 2012) is that it contributes to the justification of using the above definitions as the conceptualisation of professionalisation as key variable in this study.

3.2 Case Selection: why examine the JKB?

This thesis proposes a case study of the JKB in order to test the assumption that it functions as an effective or ideal-type transmission belt. In so doing, it hopes to exclude the possibility that the involvement of youth perspectives through the JKB as intermediary – in particular in terms of the climate policy-making process in the Netherlands – is simply a matter of so-called gesture politics. Rather, it hopes to showcase that the involvement of youth in this way is based on the JKB's representative and professional features.

Currently, there has only been one other youth organisation apart from the JKB that has been granted access to the high-level negotiating table for the Dutch National Climate Agreement, which is the '*Klimaat en Energiekoepel*' or KEK for short (Klimaatberaad, 2018; Van Bree, 2018). Furthermore, the KEK is also one of the organisations that has partnered with the JKB on the providing of a youth perspective for the Regional Energy Strategies (RESs). However, the KEK has a membership base that is limited to young professionals specialised in the climate and energy sectors only and thus, similar to most other social partners seated at the table, are mainly concerned with representing that direct membership base's interests rather than the interests of (a part of) society as a whole. The JKB tries to accomplish the latter and is therefore regarded as being the only intermediary for the interests of youth in general with negotiating table access.

As explained in the Introduction, the JKB is an umbrella organisation that unites the voices of more than 70 youth organisations in the Netherlands – and their members, adding up to a total of more than 100.000 young people – at a local, national, and more recently also at an international level (Jonge Klimaatbeweging, 2019). However, apart from the young volunteers that make up the organisation, it does not have a membership base in and on itself. Such an organisational structure – staff consistent solely of students and young professionals that

operate on a voluntary basis, and the absence of a direct membership base – may have possible implications for its functioning as a transmission belt.

The absence of a membership base, a criterion used by Albareda (2018) to exclude organisations from his sample, is in this thesis argued to be beneficial to the organisation's capability to represent a part of society (i.e. youth) as a whole in line with what is expressed in the reports introduced in the previous chapter and which is endorsed by King et al. (King et al., 2010; ROB, 2020; SER, 2013). Furthermore, contrary to the more experienced social partners that are seated at the different tables together with the JKB, the volunteers that make up the organisation and take care of its day-to-day activities are for a large part not yet as experienced, of which this thesis suggests that it may constitute negatively to the organisation's professional capabilities.

As youth organisations are to date an understudied phenomenon in the fields of representativeness and professionalisation that together constitute a transmission belt, answering the research question will contribute an interesting and novel perspective to the ongoing academic debate on the topics. Whereas this study focuses on the capabilities of a single case, it will be difficult to generalise the findings for all youth organisations in the Netherlands. However in reverse, as the JKB is thus far the only youth organisation that has been granted negotiating table access, it may well serve as an example for those youth organisations should the findings indicate that it does indeed function as an effective transmission belt.

3.3 Data Collection & Description of the Data Set

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis opts for a combination of a content analysis of texts and participant observations. In this, the 'content' can be "words, meanings, symbols, ideas, themes, or any communicated message" and the 'text' is "anything written, visual, or spoken

that serves as a medium for communication, … including books, newspaper or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, articles of clothing, websites, or works of art" (Neuman, 2014, p. 371). In simpler terms, the text is "a general name for a communication medium from which symbolic meaning is measured in content analysis" (Neuman, 2014, p. 371). Furthermore, according to Raptis, documentation "provides researchers with a range of contextualised, naturally occurring materials when direct observation needs to be supplemented or is impossible" (as cited in Mills et al., 2010, p. 322).

Apart from a pure academic interest, I also have a strong personal enthusiasm for the JKB and its mission to more actively involve youth in regional, national and international arenas of climate policy making. For that reason, I decided to become a part of the organisation by joining its ranks as a volunteer, allowing me both to make close participant observations of its day-to-day activities as well as to gain an in-depth knowledge of its internal structure and processes. However, a stand-alone method of data collection could have considerable implications for the validity and reliability of the research in the form of an over-reliance on a single set of directly observed and interpreted data (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). Therefore, this study applies a data triangulation strategy (Yin, 2003, pp. 97-101) by additionally performing a nonreactive content analysis of primary sources in the form of both publicly available content as well as non-classified content openly available to volunteers only.

These different types of primary source contents are specifically official documents (i.e. organisation's statues and annual reports); websites of the JKB and the partner organisations it represents as an umbrella; minutes taken at organisation-wide and working group meetings; organisational charts; internal contact lists and platforms; informal conversations with co-volunteers, chairs of working groups and the leadership (via online chat functions or in person); press releases and op-eds; and (reports of) past events. These contents will be used for the

purpose of measuring (the degrees of) the two key variables representativeness and professionalisation.

In order to measure the JKB's (degree of) representativeness through the use of the above described contents, the variable is operationalised using the three indicators of *formalistic representativeness*, *descriptive representativeness* and *substantive representativeness* as defined in the part on the conceptualisation in this chapter above (see **Table 1**). A similar approach is applied for the purpose of measuring the JKB's (degree of) professionalisation, by operationalising the three indicators of *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation* also as defined in the part on the conceptualisation in this chapter above (see **Table 2**).

Indicators		**Operationalisation**
Formalistic Representativeness	0	Neither electoral processes nor formal rules ensuring accountability and responsiveness present
	1	Either electoral processes or formal rules ensuring accountability and responsiveness present
	2	Both electoral processes and formal rules ensuring accountability and responsiveness present
Descriptive Representativeness	0	Neither resembling functional nor social features observable
	1	Either resembling functional or resembling social features observable
	2	Both resembling functional and social features observable
Substantive Representativeness	0	No platforms for deliberation present nor translation and articulation of input observable
	1	Platforms for deliberation present, but no translation and articulation of input observable
	2	Both platforms for deliberation present and translation and articulation of input observable

Table 1. Measuring youth involvement

Indicators		**Operationalisation**
Autonomy	0	Executive board has no discretionary decision-making authority on budgetary issues nor on hiring staff
	1	Executive board has discretionary decision-making authority on either budgetary issues or on hiring staff
	2	Executive board has discretionary decision-making authority on both budgetary issues and on hiring staff
Centralisation	0	Decisions on the organisation's position and strategy are made by the chairs of the organisation's sub units
	1	Decisions on the organisation's position and strategy are made through deliberation
	2	Decisions on the organisation's position and strategy are made by the executive board
Functional Differentiation	0	No division of labour or distribution of tasks over different units, committees or working groups
	1	A division of labour amongst the executive board and chairs of sub units, but no committees or working groups
	2	A division of labour and distribution of tasks over different units, committees and workings groups at all levels

Table 2. Measuring organisational capacity

Formalistic representativeness is measured by analysing the available content for the existence of (1) electoral processes that allow the relevant stakeholders (i.e. the JKB's [indirect] membership base, its volunteers and Dutch youth in general) to democratically authorise the JKB's executive board to act on their behalf; and of (2) formal rules that ensure the executive board can be held accountable. For d*escriptive representativeness*, this is done by checking for the existence of (1) resembling functional features (i.e. occupation or level of educational background) between the JKB (i.e. its [indirect] membership base and its volunteers) and its stakeholders (i.e. Dutch youth in general); and for (2) resembling social features (i.e. age, gender, ethnicity or political preference). In the case of *substantive representativeness*, a measurement is made by searching for the existence of (1) platforms for deliberation where stakeholders can interact with the executive board; and for (2) the translation and subsequent articulation of policy-relevant information to policy makers.

Measuring *autonomy* is done by examining whether the executive board of the JKB has the discretionary decision-making power on (1) budgetary issues; and (2) on the hiring of staff (i.e. volunteers). The degree of *centralisation* is gauged by investigating whether decisions on

the JKB's overall position and strategy are made by (1) the organisation's mid-management (i.e. the chairs of the organisation's different [sub-]units); by (2) the organisation's executive board; or (3) through a process of deliberation between the mid-management and the executive board. Finally, the indicator of *functional differentiation* looks at (1) whether there is a division of labour or distribution of tasks over different units, committees or working groups; and at (2) whether this division of labour and distribution of tasks can be observed at all levels of the organisation (i.e. at any given hierarchical level).

As both **Table 1** and **Table 2** indicate, each and every one of the six indicators is measured on a three-point ordinal scale that ranges from 0 to 2. Through participant observations and an analysis of the available contents described above, the levels of the respective indicators are established. The levels of *formalistic representativeness*, *descriptive representativeness* and *substantive representativeness* combined will show the degree of JKB's representativeness, which is indicative for the organisational dimension of youth involvement. Additionally, the levels of *autonomy*, *centralisation* and *functional differentiation* wil show the degree of professionalisation, which in turn is indicative for the organisational dimension of organisational capacity.

In line with the existing literature, this thesis argues that youth involvement and organisational capacity together constitute an ideal-type transmission belt. Therefore, in order to measure *'in how for the JKB functions as an effective transmission belt'* the values for all the indicators are added up so that the organisation can be ranked on a scale from 0 to 12, in which 12 indicates an ideal-type or effective transmission belt and 0 an ineffective transmission belt. The sum of the levels of the two variables, youth involvement and organisational capacity, will demonstrate in how far the JKB functions as an effective transmission belt and thus forms an answer to the research question.

4. ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The previous chapter outlines this study's research design, in which the variables of *representativeness* and *professionalisation* are operationalised with the use of respectively three indicators each. In this chapter, first the analysis of the different contents and observations is provided by examining whether or not the indicators described are present or can be observed. This will be conducted in order of appearance of the indicators in the previous chapter, starting with *formalistic representativeness* and ending with *functional differentiation*. In the analysis, I draw from and refer to a wide variety of information. Rather than including it in the list of references, this information is gathered in the appendix of this thesis. Each piece of documentary evidence or information has been assigned a number contingent on the order of appearance in this chapter. Within the main body of the text, this number is indicated in square brackets. When reference is made to specific paragraphs or sub-sections of a document or piece of information, this will also be specified within the brackets. This chapter concludes with the interpretation of the analysis in the form of the results.

4.1 Analysis

Formalistic Representativeness

Gauging the JKB's (level of) *formalistic representativeness* was done by examining the organisation's statutes, which are its official documents outlining the binding organiational rules and regulations [1]. In it, I paid attention in particular to Article 4, Article 5, Article 7, Article 8, Article 9 and Article 10, as these articles describe how both the executive board and the supervisory board are formed, as well as to whom they bear formal responsibility. This information is of main importance in order to find out whether or not the JKB has electoral processes that allow the relevant stakeholders to democratically authorise the executive board

to act on their behalf as well as the formal rules to ensure the executive board can be held accountable.

Whereas the most democratic way of appointing or installing the leadership of an organisation would be through a general assembly or an annual meeting, an aspect of active member involvement Albareda (2018) also applies, there is no data that indicates that the JKB adheres to such practices. The JKB's executive board is appointed by the members of its supervisory board by popular vote and when instated, the members of the executive board are accountable to the supervisory board only [1 – Article 4]. Members of the supervisory board furthermore jointly decide on the size of the executive board and they can install or dismiss any member of the executive board at any time when deemed necessary [1 – Article 4.4]. Decisions on the size of the supervisory board itself, and on the installing or dismissing of its members, are made by the members of the supervisory board as well [1 – Article 9]. Thus, when a new position opens up in the supervisory board, a candidate is chosen and appointed by the seated members of the supervisory board themselves.

Descriptive Representativeness

Examining the level of *descriptive representativeness* was done in multiple ways in order to establish whether or not resembling features could be observed between the JKB and its stakeholders. As outlined in the previous chapter, this thesis distinguishes between two different types of features, namely: functional features comprising occupation and level of educational background; and social features comprising age, gender, ethnicity and political preference. To see whether these features could be observed within the JKB, I first consulted the organisation's internal contact list which includes the educational backgrounds, (previous) occupations, ages and genders of all former and current volunteers [2]. Then, for the purpose of seeing in how far the entire political spectrum is represented within the JKB, I searched in the organisation's

annual reports [3; 4; 5] for mentioning of events with a political focus. Furthermore, I checked on the JKB's website which youth branches of political parties have affiliated themselves with the JKB [6]. Finally, I have checked the in total 72 different organisations that have currently joined the JKB [7] by going through their respective '*About Us*' pages on their websites. This, for the purpose of gaining insights into whether or not it can be said that the JKB is a cross-section of Dutch youth in general.

In terms of functional features, this study finds that the JKB is an organisation that draws to a large extent young volunteers that are enjoying or have in the past enjoyed an education at university level or equivalent, and volunteers that fulfil occupational roles that can only be achieved after having completed such relatively high levels of education [2]. Interesting to see is that this is somewhat reinforced due to the fact that, amongst the affiliated organisations that fall under the JKB's umbrella, there are also a large number of University Green Offices [6]. However, in order to compensate for this overrepresentation of high-educated youth, the JKB organises several lecture series for students at an intermediate vocational education level[5] to inform, inspire and activate them to be involved as well [8; 9; 10]. In so doing, it manages to widen its reach to a broader 'functional' support base.

As for social features, the internal contact list of volunteers shows a representation of age ranging from 16 to 32 years old over the course of the JKB's five year existence (2016-2021) [2]. Looking at gender, a general balance can be observed over time, whereas there was a slight overrepresentation of men in the early days of the organisation and there now is a slight overrepresentation of women [2]. In terms of ethnicity, the JKB acknowledges that it experiences difficulties with engaging and involving youth from more various backgrounds, but it regards diversity and inclusion to be of high importance both amongst its own volunteers as well as within its (indirect) membership base [3: p. 21; 4: pp. 25, 29, 35; 5: pp. 18-19, 21,

[5] Intermediate vocational education is '*MBO*' in Dutch.

28]. Lastly, it is worth noticing that with regards to the JKB's reflection of political preference amongst youth, it counts mainly youth branches of political parties on the left of the political spectrum [6]. Yet, through a joint effort of the JKB and most youth branches of political parties seated in parliament, it managed to involve a wider audience from both sides of the political spectrum by hosting events where youth were able to question and debate with (candidate) members of parliament from a wide variety of parties who were appointed by the JKB as so-called *climate candidates* [11; 12].

Substantive Representativeness

Here, the level of *substantive representativeness* is analysed by looking at content that indicates the existence of platforms for deliberation where stakeholders can interact with the executive board, as well as at content from which can be deduced that this executive board effectively translates and subsequently articulates policy-relevant information to policy makers for the benefit of said stakeholders. To this end, I have specifically analysed the JKB's annual reports, (reports of) past events and the organisation's website [3; 4; 5; 6; 13; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18] to check whether or not it has allowed for deliberation amongst all the relevant actors. Furthermore, I have searched for press releases and op-eds that were mainly focused on political themes [19] with the aim to analyse whether the interests of youth are actually being represented in practice.

Analysis of the above mentioned contents indicate ample opportunities for deliberation. Just to name a few examples, the JKB has in the past and to date still organises so-called *Climate Dialogues*, *Climate Deliberations* and *Climate Summits* open to any young person who wants to join, no matter whether they are a member of one of the JKB's partner organisations or not [13; 14; 15; 16]. Furthermore, it has more recently launched an online panel where members and non-members alike can provide the JKB with input on how young people in general feel about certain topics within the climate debate through monthly polls [17; 18].

Then, when examining whether or not the JKB's executive board – as a body representative for all its stakeholders – actually defends the interests of Dutch youth in general, a press release on the finalisation of the Dutch National Climate Agreement and the JKB's role in it provided the answer [19]. During the negotiations of the agreement, positive steps towards a so-called *green transition* were made. However, the JKB argued that it would not be enough to reach the goals set out in the Paris Agreement that aim for a sustainable future, one in which youth will have to live the longest, and thus decided in protest not to sign the finalised national climate agreement [5: p. 8]. In so doing, it showed that it valued the best interests of its stakeholders over simply being one of the co-signers of the agreement along with most other social partners.

Autonomy

In the case of *autonomy*, the analysis focused itself on the organisational statutes to investigate with whom the formal responsibility lies in terms of budgetary issues [1], and on informal conversations with co-volunteers, chairs of working groups and members of the executive board. In the statutes, I paid attention in particular to Article 3 and Article 5, as these articles describe respectively how the organisation deals with the financial aspects and who bears the responsibility for these financial aspects of the JKB. As for the conversations, I specifically talked to the human resource (HR) manager (who is part of the executive board) and her team of volunteers about hiring practices within the JKB.

The statutes explicitly describe that the budgetary component of the JKB – comprising subsidies, gifts, bequests, constitutions of heir, donations, returns on investment, and any other forms of financial benefits or income – are the responsibility of the treasurer, whom the executive board itself appoints from its midst [1]. The handling of budgetary issues is thus a matter for which the discretionary power lies solely with the (treasurer of the) executive board.

However, the hiring of new volunteers is the responsibility of the HR team. While this team is chaired by the HR manager, who is herself a member of the executive board, the process of screening candidates and deciding on who to hire is done through a process of deliberation between the HR manager, her team members, and sometimes also the chair of a specific working group to which a candidate applies. The latter was the case when I myself applied for the role of public affairs manager within the JKB's working group for global partnerships.

Centralisation

Measuring *centralisation* has been done by analysing the organisational statutes in order to find out where the official decision-making power lies when deciding on the JKB's overall position and strategy [1], as well as through the use of minutes taken during organisation-wide meetings and meetings of the working group that I myself am now a part of [20; 21]. The articles of main interest for the analysis here were Article 7 and Article 12, as they respectively describe the formal processes of decision making within the organisation on the levels of both the executive and supervisory boards. The minutes were used to look for any record from which can be deduced that the establishing of the JKB's position or strategy has ever been open for deliberation.

This analysis in particular provided an interesting find. According to the formal regulations spelled out in the statutes, the discretion to define the JKB's position and strategy officially lies with the executive board, with the single condition that its decision has to be approved by the supervisory board [1]. Nevertheless, the analysed minutes do show that nearly all major decisions pertaining to the position of the organisation have been made after deliberation during the organisation-wide meetings [20]. In contrast, when the working group for global partnerships had to establish a political position in preparation for a large event, the

minutes show that reference is made to the organisation's overall position, which it subsequently adopted [21].

Functional Differentiation

For the last of the indicators, *functional differentiation*, the focus of the analysis was put on the JKB's (online) organisational charts [22; 23]. The organisational chart displays the hierarchical structure of the JKB, it specifies the different units, committees or workings groups the organisation counts, and indicates the varying tasks on the individual level. Therefore, I can be brief in terms of the measuring of this specific indictor.

The website of the JKB has a page called '*Our Team*' on which it clearly shows in what way the organisation is constructed. Apart from the executive board, it counts thirteen different working groups that each has its own specific focus ranging from event management to public relations, and from public affairs to global partnerships [23]. Furthermore, within the varying working groups, each individual has a specific task as well [22]. To use myself as an example, I have taken on the role of public affairs manager within the working group for global partnerships, which itself is a functionally differentiated sub-unit of the JKB.

4.2 Results

Considering the above, this subsection presents the results that can be drawn from the analyses. First of all, in the installing or appointing of the organisational leadership within the JKB, the stakeholders do not enjoy any kind of influence as there is no electoral process. Furthermore, the only body that formally oversees the practices of the JKB's executive board and to which it has to bear responsibility is the supervisory board, which has been given full discretion and is thus completely autonomous in and on itself.

Furthermore, the JKB exhibits both a broad range of functional features, as well as an extensive range of social features. The analysis shows that in cases where the organisation does not possess all the resembling features within its own organisational structure, it actively tries to compensate for any form of overrepresentation or underrepresentation to the best of its abilities and in a creative fashion.

Also, there are many platforms provided by the JKB that allow for the open deliberation between all the relevant stakeholders and the organisation's executive board according to the analysis. Moreover, the JKB's executive board has shown that it is first and foremost concerned with the defending of the stakeholders' interests, even when it is seated at a high-level negotiating table along with actors who are often far more experienced.

Then, considering the analysis of where the discretionary decision-making authority lies within the JKB on budgetary issues and hiring staff, it becomes clear that the executive board does enjoy the decision-making power with regards to the financial aspects of the organisation. However, in terms of hiring new or additional staff, the task is divided over multiple actors within the organisation.

Interestingly, while the JKB has thus far decided on its overall position and strategy through the informal practice of organisation-wide deliberation, its formal structures do authorise the executive board to make such decisions on its own accord if need be, without the interference from the organisation's mid-management or any other actors internal or external to the JKB.

Finally, from analysing in how far there is a division of labour and distribution of tasks within the JKB, it becomes clear that functional differentiation is visible at any given hierarchical level, ranging from the executive board, to the chairs of the working groups, and even amongst the individual members of the different working groups.

With the findings described above, the degrees of the different indicators measured per variable can be demonstrated. This is done by assigning the appropriate measure introduced through the operationalisation in the previous chapter (see **Table 1** and **Table 2**), the result of which is demonstrated below (see **Table 3**).

Indicators	**Degree**	**Indicators**	**Degree**	**Sum**
Formalistic Representativeness	0	*Autonomy*	1	
Descriptive Representativeness	2	*Centralisation*	2	
Substantive Representativeness	2	*Functional Differentiation*	2	
Total youth involvement	4	***Total organisational capacity***	5	9

Table 3. Results: Observed degrees of youth involvement and organisational capacity

As the results show, the JKB scores 4 on a scale ranging from 0 to 6 in terms of youth involvement, and scores 5 on a scale ranging from 0 to 6 in terms of organisational capacity and thus the hypotheses are confirmed. In the bottom right corner of **Table 3**, the sum of the degree of youth involvement and the degree of organisational capacity – together constituting a transmission belt function – is presented. With a score of 9 on a combined scale ranging from 0 to 12, the JKB is far closer to functioning as an effective transmission belt than it is to functioning as an ineffective transmission belt.

5. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

5.1 Conclusion

This thesis has tried to formulate an answer to the question: '*In how far does the JKB function as an effective transmission belt*?' Drawing from the existing literature on the concepts of the transmission belt function, representativeness and professionalisation, it hypothesised that an organisation that already has negotiating table access should in essence exhibit high levels of youth involvement and organisational capacity. Considering the fact that the *Jonge Klimaatbeweging* (JKB) is a youth organisation that attempts to influence policy makers to include the input of youth in the climate policy-making process, this study aimed to rule out gesture politics as a possible explanation for the fact that the JKB was granted two seats at the table for the National Climate Agreement negotiations in the Netherlands, as well as a fixed seat within each of the 30 regions in the country that are concerned with implementing the so-called Regional Energy Strategies.

The study finds that, while lacking formalistic forms of representation, the JKB scores high on descriptive and substantive representativeness. Furthermore, despite the fact that the JKB is a youth organisation made up solely of young volunteers with limited experience, the organisation has reached an almost perfect level of professionalisation. The combined results show that the JKB does well with regards to the active involvement of Dutch youth in general, while simultaneously ensuring a high degree of organisational capacity. Therefore, though it may not yet be classified as an organisation functioning as an ideal-type or effective transmission belt, the JKB does a very decent job for a youth organisation that has yet to celebrate its first lustrum.

Thus far, youth organisations have been an understudied phenomenon in the fields of representativeness, professionalisation and the transmission belt function. As such, the findings

put forward in this thesis contribute an interesting and novel perspective to the ongoing academic debate on the topics. Moreover, while it may be difficult at this point to generalise these findings resulting from the JKB for all youth organisations both national and abroad, this study argues that the results have shown it may well serve as an example for those youth organisations.

5.2 Discussion

Not unlike most studies, this thesis too does come with its limitations. Most importantly, it relies to a large extent on data gathered through the use of participant observations and to a small degree also on informal conversations. The downside to this is that it is difficult to provide the reader with tangible evidence. In using a data triangulation strategy by means of an in-depth content analysis as an additional source of information, this study has attempted to compensate for the possible implications to the validity and reliability of the research. Another limitation is that some information necessary to answer the research question was only available to the volunteers of the JKB. This has implications for the falsifiability and reproducibility of this research, as it entails that anyone who wants to test the accuracy of the results would have to become a volunteer of the organisation. It should be noted however, that the nonreactive approach applied in this study does come with the advantage that the data acquired is not influenced by personal perceptions of those groups or individuals under investigation, which makes that the case is analysed as is. Future research may however opt for a different approach, by distributing a questionnaire amongst or performing interviews with those who are already active as volunteers within all levels of the organisation, in order to reaffirm (or disprove) the results presented here.

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APPENDIX

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