

# Understand Conflict Development Process

A case study in Natura 2000 site: Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn



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## **Abstract**

In the past decades planning has been developed from a rational and technocratic style to a participatory style. Since 1990s the participatory or collaborative planning became popular in western community due to the involvement of different participants and considerations of their perspectives. However, a democratic philosophy behind this planning style results in the unavoidable existence of conflicts between different actors in planning process. The objective of this research focuses on exploring conflict as a dynamic process. Besides an extensive literature review, a case study on one Natura 2000 site (Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn) was conducted. The results show that conflict cannot be avoided; and it develops as a systematic process along the planning process. Different conflict processes appear in the planning process; but they are unnecessarily and not immediately confronting with each other unless the understandings of participants on the planning issues can be at the same level. The results also show the study on conflict process can help planners or decision maker expand the considerations on different perspectives; thereby better prepare and coordinate the decision making process.

Key words: stakeholder participation, conflict, process, Natura 2000, Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn

## Preface

As ordinary human beings, we are facing different conflicts every day. These conflicts can be of our own, for example the goals we set for ourselves sometimes may be beyond our capability; conflicts can also between people, for example we disagree with someone(s). Nevertheless our attention in most of cases is put on what are the conflicts; and we try to avoid them; not on how can these conflicts be there. As the last assignment of my college life, I have explored the conflict, which is perceived as something annoying. Of course this research is about conflict in spatial planning practice. I personally found this topic interesting and challenging since conflict is always perceived as negative term to be avoided in planning practice. But its existence is fairly important to the quality of decision making. During this journey, I learnt how to understand conflict and how to face its existence; and I also found its value. In a wider context, I had the chance to go into the nature, talk to people, listen to different stories; I obtained a better understanding of doing scientific research. Those are all I had expected!

With the preface I would like to thank everybody who has helped me during this research. First of all I'd like to give the greatest appreciation to my parents for supporting my study and life in the Netherlands. Secondly I'd to appreciate my supervisor Raoul Beunen for the inspiring supervision, fruitful discussion and kind understanding on my difficult situation in finalizing this thesis. Thirdly I would like to thank Mr. Jan Willem van der Vegte from the Province of Gelderland and Ms. Danielle Verhoeven from Rijkswaterstaat for accepting my request for interviews and informative discussions. Last but not least, I like to thank all my friends, colleagues and teachers for being around me and encouraging me during this research. Thank you all!

Please enjoy reading this thesis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Hu Hao', written over a diagonal line.

Hu Hao

February, 2012, Wageningen

## Summary

In the past decades spatial planning developed toward a more participatory or communicative style. It proceeds by involving and coordinating different perspectives in order to reach final consensus among those participants. Nevertheless it is unavoidable that participants would confront with each other. On the one hand conflict is unavoidable in participatory planning process; on the other hand participatory planning tries to avoid conflict. Both positive and negative perspectives on the concept of conflict exist in different researches. This research wants to provide a further understanding of conflict in spatial planning. Rather than perceiving conflict as individual term to study, this research considers conflict as a dynamic process since conflict accompanies and develops along the planning decision making. This process remarkably influences the direction of decision making. Therefore the main research question was formulated:

### ***How can the conflict process be conceptually understood in the context of participatory spatial planning?***

To answer this research questions, two sub research questions were formulated: 1. how can conflict be understood? 2. How does conflict develop as a process? By an extensive literature review on theories about conflict process and conducting a case study on the Nature 2000 site Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn (including both document review and interviews), the answer to main the research question was concluded:

1. The definitions of conflict in general varies in two main streams: the first one is considering conflict as one single phenomena that contains competitive intentions; the second one is considering conflict as cyclized and dynamic process in which different phenomena systematically develops in a sequence.
2. Conflict process consists of three main sections. The first one is the conditions of conflicts. It contains personal (e.g. interests) and interpersonal issues (e.g. communication); the second section is an interaction process, which consists of a perception, emotion and behaviour sequence; the third section is a combination of effects of both previous sections. It determines the directions of conflict development. However, horizontally none of conflict processes necessarily completes the whole procedure of the conflict development. Vertically different conflict processes may not necessarily confront with each other due to different interpretations on policies and context. This may result in either a temporary peaceful situation or a more seriously conflictful situation if the processes keep proceeding. An elaborative understanding of conflict extends the scope of consideration for planners and decision makers in participatory planning practice. Additionally studies on conflict process can also help prevent explosion of large amount of conflictful issues that had been hidden in a temporary peaceful situation; thereby improve mutual understandings among participants in the planning process.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Research Background

In the past decades, remarkable transition has been taking place in planning theories in western world since the late 1960s-1970s. A traditional top-down planning approach is proven to be insufficient to deal with increasing concerns and conflicts raised in planning decision-making process. According to Healey (1997), planning is claimed to be an interactive and collaborative reasoning process based on the influence of Habermas's communicative rationality theory and discursive ethic (Healey, 1997, p53); and the dominant role of politicians in decision making was thereby challenged (Polger, 2000). Nowadays such communicative way of planning, which is conceptualized as "collaborative planning" or "participatory planning", becomes a popular planning perspective all over western world. One of the most important concepts embedded in this planning style is public/stakeholder participation. By such a communicative intention of planning, those who have stakes in the projects, but were marginalized from the planning process, are finally able to be involved and express themselves in an interactive manner. This makes a planning process much more comprehensive; but complex due to its consideration on various stakeholders' interests and local knowledge. Such local knowledge can collectively work with scientific knowledge in order to build up a comprehensive understanding on a complex and dynamic socio-ecological system and process (Reed, 2008). However, it is also proven to be more difficult to implement comparing to a traditional technocratic planning approach. In such planning process, in spite of its comprehensiveness in involving various interests and interpretation, these interests or perspectives are always confronting with each other. This results in a complex decision making with potential conflicts between stakeholders and responsible organizations and authorities. Most of the time people perceive conflict as a negative term; and participatory planning process aims to reduce such conflicts and eventually reach consensus among participants. Nevertheless conflict is not overwhelmingly negative to a planning process; and is proven to be valuable in some studies. Thus a deep understanding of conflict deserves a further investigation.

## 1.2 Problem Description

The study of conflict is quite complex since it can be viewed in different dimensions and different people perceive conflict differently. Generally conflicts have been seen as dangerous corrosive and destructive of social order (Flyvbjerg, 2001). As Wall & Callister (1995) argued, conflict to most of us is unpleasant. Due to its aversiveness, decision makers perceive conflict as harmful and try to avoid it (Schweiger et al. 1986). Such a negative view also relies on the implication of Habermas's theory to planning field; a consensus oriented planning by involving different stakeholders. Such a participatory planning seeks highly skill facilitation to provide high likelihood of dealing with conflicts (Reed, 2008). But some researches hold some contrary opinions on conflict. According to Schwenk (1990), many researches show that conflict and disagreement between decision makers can improve the quality of decision making (Schwenk, 1990). In addition, Hillier (2003) suggests conflicting

differences between different groups' conceptions of 'good' are positively diverse values to be recognized in decision making process (Hillier, 2003). Nevertheless this research does not aim to prove whether conflict should be viewed as a positive or negative term; but instead to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of conflict as a process and to create a dialectical understanding on the concept of conflict. Just like other issues such as power relation, conflict accompanies and develops along the planning decision making. This process remarkably influences the direction of decision making. Thus in order to better understand a participatory planning process, it is indispensable to investigate the conflict (s) between different stakeholders or participants. The focus is not put on what are those conflicts, but on how to understand the conflict (s) as process (es) developing along the participatory planning process. On the other side considering conflict as process can reflect the changing opinions and understandings of different participants along the planning process.

### ***1.3 Research Objective and Questions***

According to the introduction of the research context and the problem focus, the main research objective can be concluded and formulated as follow:

***To provide an elaborative understanding on conflict as a process in participatory spatial planning***

#### **Research Question and Sub-Research Questions**

To achieve the research objective, a research question was translated as follow:

***How can the conflict process conceptually understood in the context of participatory spatial planning?***

In order to eventually resolve conflicts between different stakeholders and responsible authorities, it is crucial to understand those conflicts occurred in the planning process of Natura 2000. However conflict is such a broad and vague term and is perceived by scholars from different perspectives. According to Thomas (1992), conflict can be understood in two main dimensions. One is conflicts as one phenomena or situation with a range of competitive intentions of different participants; another one is conflict as dynamic process of episode development with contains a range of phenomena. This research will focus on the latter perspective in order to gain insights on how conflicts are triggered, developed and perceived, etc. Thus following two research questions are derived.

-How can conflict be understood?

-How does conflict develop as a process?

## **1.4 Research Methods**

This research can be divided into several parts of studies. First one is the theoretical background about conflicts (as a process) in stakeholder participation; the second is the feeling, perceptions, interpretations and experience of different participants on conflicts in a participatory process. Thus it is fairly important to conduct a case study. A case study brings the research to a practice context, in which the theoretical abstraction can be approached and investigated. By comparing results of both theories and case study, the results of the research can be improved and enriched. In this research a case study on Natura 2000 in the Netherlands is chosen. Such features are in coherence with what Creswell (2008) concluded as characteristics of qualitative research. Thus this research will be conducted with a qualitative research design. The research methods of this thesis in general consist of literature review and case study. The literature review is mainly used in studying theories about conflict process and different components it addresses. The case study contains desk study (documents and website information), interview and field trip (observation).

### **1.4.1 Literature Review**

The background knowledge of the conflict, including its definition and its development as a dynamic process, will be studied through an extensive scientific literature review and book review. The main efforts will be put on the former one. The selection of the scientific literatures will not be limited to the study field of spatial planning, but within a relatively large scope of study categories including business study, organizational study, environmental management, nature management, policy studies and so forth since 'conflict' as a scientific term are being discussed in different fields and those study fields apply the same theory and approaches (collaborative planning, communication theory). This strategy also helps get considerable knowledge about the theories. The literatures can be accessed through internet search engine such as 'Google Scholar' or 'Scopus' by entering key words (e.g. 'conflict management', 'conflict process') relating to conflict and its process. Besides, a "snow ball" method will provide even more accurately relevant set of literature citations. After the literature review, the answer to the two research questions will be addressed. However, these answers might contain a broad set of information. Then this information will be analysed and extracted into very specific questions respectively referring to each concept. The new questions will be asked during the interview in the case study.

### **1.4.2 Case Study**

The selection of the case in this research is based on following three criteria: 1) the case site should be designated or at least proposed as a Natura 2000 site; 2) different actors were involved in the planning process; 3) the process faces a great deal of discussion and conflicts; 4) the designation or formulation of management plan are still in process. Due to the research environment, understanding Dutch language will be one of the remarkable obstacles of limiting data collection. Thus applying multiple approaches and consulting various sources in the case study will ensure the comprehensiveness of information. The

data collection in the case study will be conducted by three main approaches, respectively desk study, interview and field trip (observation).

### **Desk study**

The desk study is carried out to collect two types of information, namely official documents and internet website. The official documents contains information about the background information about specific Natura 2000 site, on-going projects, land-use activities, responsible authorities, involved stakeholders and relevant reports, etc. These documents are always requested from the concerned organizations, ministries or municipalities. They can also be downloaded from the official website of European Commission, the responsible ministry (ministry LNV), of the municipality or specifically of Natura 2000 (e.g Regie Bureau Natura 2000). These are the options that may provide English information, which is indispensable for this research. If some of very important information is written in Dutch, a translating tool has been used (e.g. Google Translate). Then the website provides a very quick access to the latest information about the project, objective, and interests of relevant organizations. But it is likely that the majority of the information from the website may be written in Dutch.

### **Interview**

Besides literature review, interview is another important research method for this research since it aims to provide an opportunity to have a direct conversation with responsible authorities or organizations or individuals and to gather the essential information that have never been published for the research and are up to date. The selection of interviewees is based on following criteria: 1) the interviewees should be involved in the planning process of selected Natura 2000 site; 2) the interpretation of the interviewee should be representative to the organization or group he or she belongs to.

With the basis of desk study, the contact information of relevant interviewees can be determined; and they will be contacted by e-mail and requested for an interview. Normally the contact will be done as early as possible since the schedule of the interviewees will influence the appointment for the interview. For this research a semi structured interview will be conducted. Because the answers to the interview questions are fairly different among interviewees and are influenced by their values, interest, knowledge and experiences, for example a provincial official and a farmer or a highly educated experts and an uneducated people cannot be asked by the same questions or in the same way; and a semi structured interview allows me to create an open and two way communication with the interviewees.

### **Field trip (observation)**

The field trip will be used to obtain more concrete pictures about selected Natura 2000 sites or specific activities conducted by the interviewee. If lucky enough, some interviews to a random sample on the field can be conducted in order to gather extra information about the site or the activities. The field trip can be conducted by myself or guided by the interviewee if it can be arranged during the interview. Also some conclusions need to be addressed by observing the behaviour of the actors. For example, the site might be once of important recreational and tourism value; after being designated as a Natura 2000 site, the site would be closed to the public for the conservation objective. The behaviours of the usual visitors in the designated site can reflect in some points on their reaction on the Natura 2000 policy.

### **Short Overview of the Case**

In this research specific research context focuses on the implementation of Natura 2000 policy of European Commission since this EU project is remarkably characterised as a stakeholder participation process with a lot of conflicts. Nowadays the implementations of Natura 2000 in Member States face serious problems (Beunen, 2006; Ferranti *et al*, 2010). Due to the influence of the European directives on the existing spatial planning and nature conservation regimes, the implementation Natura 2000 faces delays or protest in different member states (Beunen, 2010). For example, a great challenge was brought to the responsible authorities in the member states to transpose both European Birds and Habitat directives into their own nature conservation policies. It is not only a simple modification in nature legislation, but also, with the designation of the Natura 2000 sites in the member states of EU, a change in current nature conservation objectives, decision making process and power relations (involvement of European Commission need to be reconsidered and reformulated in order to adapt to the formal requirements for natural management under the directives). This obviously generates lots of the discussion and conflicts between the responsible authorities and the participants of the activities (e.g. local inhabitants, farmers, natural group) at local or site level. Thus conducting a case study on the conflict process (es) in the implementation process of Natura 2000 policy is relevant to this research. Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, which is located in the lower basin of River Rhine crossing the Province of Gelderland and Utrecht, is chosen as the study area of this research. Until present the designation of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is not finalized and is facing remarkable delay due to the explosion of issues relating to local social and economic activities. More specific information about the political context of Natura 2000 and the case will be given in chapter 3.

### ***1.5 Report Structure***

In chapter 2 the theoretical background on conflict will be introduced. The background knowledge includes the definition of conflict and the theoretical framework of conflict as a dynamic process. A set of questions will be derived from the theoretical framework and will be used as interview questions for the case study. In chapter 3, the case study of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn will be addressed; and the answers to the interview questions will be analysed by the theoretical framework. Together with research results in chapter 2 and chapter 3, the answer to the main research question will be discussed in chapter 4. In chapter 5 the answers to the main research questions and some recommendations will be given; and some remaining points discovered in the research that need further investigation will be discussed.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

*This chapter contains comprehensive exploration in the theoretical backgrounds of the concept of 'conflict' based on an extensive literature review. Section 2.1 includes different definitions of conflict by different scholars, which in general have two main streams. The research focuses on a process dimension of conflict. In section 2.2, the conflict process is elaborated by introducing by two conflict models, namely a conflict cycle and conflict episode. By studying both models some focused analytical points for the case study are concluded in section 2.3. In the last section, a conceptual model, which explains the interrelationship between different analytical points, are established.*

### 2.1 Definition of Conflict

Conflict has been with us for a really long time. It occurs in our everyday life. Nowadays conflict as a big topic has been extensively studied in many fields such as management study, political study, business study and so forth. Relevant literatures about conflict studies have been written since decades ago. Nevertheless before connecting this concept with this research on Natura 2000, it is to crucial to understand first of all what exactly is conflict. When it comes to the definition of conflict, after a broad literature review, it is found that conflict is defined under two main streams (Thomas, 1992). One is focusing on conflict as a phenomena which contains competitive intentions between different parties; another one is advocated by Pondy (1967) focusing on conflict process which contains a range of phenomena (Thomas, 1992). This research will focus on the latter dimension of conflict and therefore elaborate the sequential development of conflict in the decision making in the management of Natura 2000 sites. Such a selected perspective also help the audience understand the conflict in a more smooth and neutral manner.

Wall & Callister (1995) concludes that '*in general conflict is a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party*' (Wall & Callister, 1995, p517). Such process involves two or more parties; and a party, there to conflict, must receive the opposition of the other (Wall & Callister, 1995). Pondy (1967) also argued to consider conflict as a process. Pondy (1967) suggested four definitions of conflicts referring to its uses in different researches to describe respectively: '*(1) antecedent conditions (for example, scarcity of resources, policy differences) of conflictful behaviour; (2) affective states (e.g., stress, tension, hostility, anxiety, etc.) of the individuals involved (3) cognitive states of individuals, i.e., their perception or awareness of conflictful situations, and (4) conflictful behaviours, ranging from passive resistance to overt aggression*' (Pondy, 1967, p298). Instead of choosing among these conceptual definitions, Pondy (1967) suggested to consider each term as a relevant and interrelated stage of the development of conflict episode; thereby developed a five stages model of conflicts in order to specify the process of the conflict development (Pondy, 1967; Thomas, 1992). This conflict episode process will be elaborated in section 2.2.2

## 2.2 Conflict Process

Based on its definition(s), it is readily to understand that study on conflict should not only focus on certain situation or phenomenon at certain monument, but instead on its process dimension.

### 2.2.1 Conflict Cycle

According to Wall & Callister (1995), conflict has been explored at five distinct levels, respectively Personal level, Interpersonal level, intergroup level, Inter organization level and international level. In a personal level, *'conflict arises because the individual occupies more than one role (e.g., principal and mother) and finds that some demands from each role cannot be met simultaneously'* (Wall & Callister, 1995, p516). Conflict in an interpersonal level implies that one 'comes in conflict' with other(s) and so forth for other levels (Wall & Callister, 1995). As Wall & Callister (1995) demonstrates, to many scholars' agreements, a generic cycle format (figure 1) is shared by conflicts at different levels.

Such format consists of three main components as a normal social process, namely "causes" which triggers the conflicts, "core process", in which conflicts in itself develops and "effects" resulted from the core process. When certain effects were generated, they feed back to the causes. Each conflict at each level operates repeatedly under certain context.

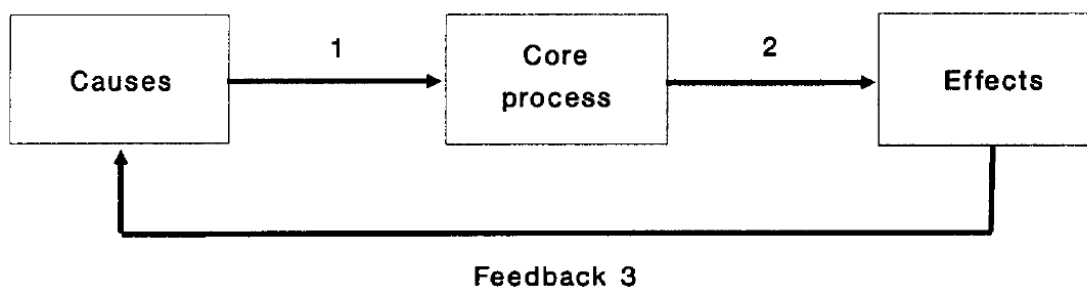


Figure 1 Conflict Cycle

(Wall & Callister, 1995)

### Cause of Conflicts

Wall & Callister (1995) provides three main categories for the causes of conflicts: (1) individual characteristics, which describes some instinctual factors existing in individual (parties) that would influence the perception of individuals and trigger conflicts; (2) interpersonal factors that cause conflicts when two or more parties encounter with each other; and (3) the issues that the conflict is about. The focus of this research will be put on the explanation of individual and interpersonal factors.

The category of 'individual characteristics' contains: personality, values, goals, commitment to position, stress, anger, desire for autonomy. Among these different factors, according to Wall & Callister (1995), value and goals are the two most significant issues that would generate conflicts. According Schmidt and Kochan (1972), Walker (1970)'s research states that: If two members hold divergent goals (latent conflicts), and if these goals motivate their



behaviour, then one member will be motivated to behave in a way which is inconsistent with the goals of the other (Schmidt and Kochan, 1972).

The category of 'interpersonal factors' contains five sub groupings of causes of conflicts, respectively: **perceptual interface**, **communication**, **behaviour**, **structure**, **pervious interaction**. Each of these typologies includes several more specific issues that cause conflicts between one party and other(s).

Perceptual interface includes the perception of the party that other(s) has high goal; that other's intention counter to party's intention, fairness norms. As Schmidt and Kochan (1972) emphases, perception of goal incompatibility is one precondition of conflict. Different parities, individuals or units are striving to the attainment or goals which are perceived to be incompatible. The reason why such perceptions cause conflict laid on the idea that the strive for achieving goals by one party is seen to prevent other from achieving goals and at other's expense (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972; Bennett et al, 2001). Also distrust and misunderstandings between participants spawn conflicts (Wall & Callister, 1995). Communication, as Wall & Callister (1995) argue, can cause conflicts when it operates in an improper way. When the communication is low among participants, the knowledge exchange would be low; and this results in difficulties in coordination. But on the other hand, too extensive and frequent communication can also spawn misunderstanding and resultant conflicts between party and others (Wall & Callister, 1995). An accurate and lucid communication would increase the transparency of the conversation between participants. Such type of communication would convey criticism, anger, dislike, high goal, etc. and therefore readily lead to conflicts (Wall & Callister, 1995).

In behaviour category, reduction of party's or other's outcomes is an unequivocal source of conflicts (Wall & Callister, 1995). Also blocking one's goals or aspiration readily generates conflicts (Alter, 1990). Besides, the low level of interaction among disputants would also contribute to negative perceptions and misinterpretations of the intentions of the disputants thereby generate conflicts. It is found that power struggle is a rather prevalent source of conflict (Wall & Callister, 1995). The reduction of one's power by the other or the attempts of one's to control over other(s) are considered as the source of conflict. Rationalization and the misuse of power are among the most important problems of our time (Flyvbjerg, 2002).

In the category of structure, Wall & Callister (1995) highlighted the effects of the creation of interdependence. In interdependent relationship would somehow limit the perceptions, aspiration, behaviours of different parties. And such restriction leads to conflicts between participants due to their struggles for the claims for their own goals, interests and so forth. As March & Simon (1958) argues, conflict is very likely to occur when interdependence is accompanied by differing perceptions and divergent goals (Wall & Callister, 1995).

Lastly the previous interaction between participants would also generate conflicts in present interaction between these participants.

### ***Core Process***

The core process is actually a development process of conflict when two or more parties or individual encounter each other. As Wall & Callister(1995) described, most researchers agree upon the idea that the core process is the interpersonal behaviours in which one or both disputants oppose counterpart's interests/goals (Wall & Callister, 1995). Thomas (1992) claimed such a core process as a complex and cognitively-orientated process (Wall & Callister, 1995). Such a process starts from the perceptions and realization of one party on the negative effects that other(s)'s might generate. Then an emotional experience as Thomas termed 'emotional surge' (e.g. anger, frustration) occurred; and correspondent actions are taken to encounter others. On the other hand, the other also goes through the same sequence from awareness/perception, consideration, to emotion and finally arrives at action to react the party's behaviours (Wall & Callister, 1995). Thus according to the above description, the core process of conflict in general is a cognitive sequence of perceiving, feeling and behaving. With such sequence, the generation of conflict is under way.

### ***Effects***

After a complex sequence of the conflict core process, relevant effects are generated under same headings of grouping as that of causes of conflicts as an addition of group of 'conflict residue' (Wall & Callister, 1995). Simply saying this category is the producing outcomes of conflicts. It can be agreements among disputants as resolutions to conflicts. Likewise, residues can also be deadlocks.

### **2.2.2 Five Stage Model**

Besides the above conflict cycle process concluded by Wall & Callister (1995), Pondy (1967) had suggested another process model of conflict. Such a process is demonstrated as a five stage model of conflict episode (see figure 2). Each episode consequently consists of latency, feeling, perception, manifestation and aftermath (Pondy, 1967).

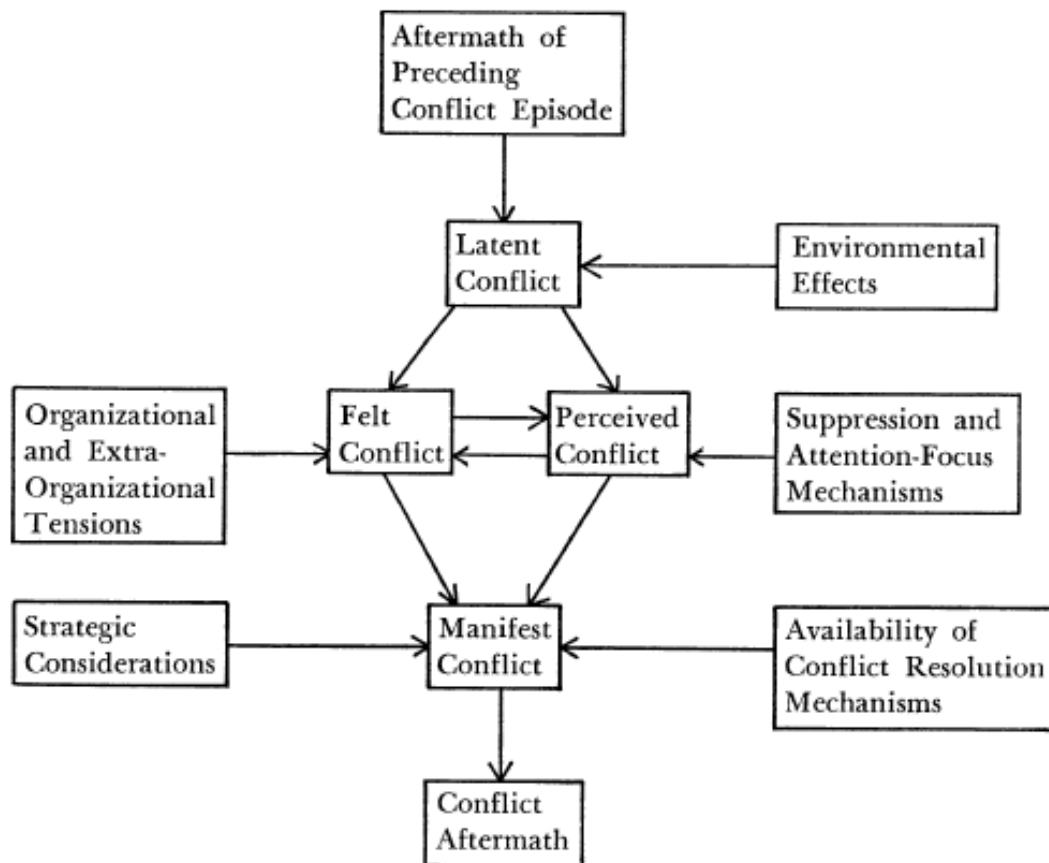


Figure 2. The Dynamics of a Conflict Episode

(Pondy, 1976)

**Latent Conflict**

Latent conflict can be understood as conflict potential. It provides a list of underlying conditions or sources of conflict. After a search of relevant literatures, Pondy (1967) has summarized three fundamental types of latent conflict: (1) competition for scarce resources (2) drives for autonomy, (3) divergence of subunit goals (Pondy, 1967). These three types of latent conflicts are formed in different situations. Competition forms the basis of conflict when demands of participants for resource exceed its availability. Participants' desire for autonomy forms the basis of conflict when one party attempts to control over other parties or participants. Divergence of participants' goals forms the conflict when two or more parties or participants with different goals have to cooperate with each other and no consensus can be achieved (Pondy, 1967). These types of latent conflict can be present simultaneously.

**Perceived Conflict**

Perceived conflicts imply a cognitive orientation within the development of conflict in its process. Such perceived conflict points to individuals' perception or awareness of a conflictful situation (Pondy, 1967). Conflict can be perceived when no condition of the latent conflict exists. Latent conflict can also exist when no participant perceive the conflicts (Pondy, 1967). In the first situation, conflict is directly connected to the misunderstanding

between different participants; while the second situation is related to a value that is central to participants' personalities.

### ***Felt Conflict***

When introducing the felt conflict, Pondy (1967) firstly emphasized the difference between felt conflict and perceiving conflict. Perceiving conflict means one party or individual is aware of potential conflict, which is based on the differentiation of their goals and values. Feeling a conflict is internal to the individual's emotion, such as anger, anxiety, frustration, tension, etc. As Pondy (1967) argued, the awareness or perception of one party or individual on conflictual situation or serious disagreement with other (s) might not have effects on the party or individual's affection towards the other(s). The felt conflict is termed as emotional affections between actors when conflict occurs. According to Pondy (1967), felt conflict is under a personalized mechanism. The personalization of conflict can be explained in two ways. One is that an individual need to vent the anxieties resulted from organizational or extra-organizational pressure; another one is the whole personality of individual is involved in the relationship (Pondy, 1967)

### ***Manifest Conflict***

Manifest conflict refers to a range of conflictful behaviours. Pondy (1967) define it as a behaviour '*which, in the mind of the actor, frustrates the goals of at least some of the other*' (Pondy, 1967, p304). As Pondy (1967) argued, the most obvious conflictful behaviour is open aggression. However, such violent behaviour is proscribed by organizational norm. But the motivation still remains. Normally such behaviour is manifested in forms of aggressive and defensive coalition or apathy. The behaviour must be interpreted in the context it takes. The disputants are supposed to be involved in the same relationship. And to be a conflictual behaviour, one participant should be engaged **knowingly** to frustrate or block other's goals; and such behaviour must be perceived by both disputants as conflictful (Pondy, 1967). As Pondy (1967) mentioned, many conflict resolution programs are applied in the interface between manifest conflict and either felt conflict or perceived conflict to prevent the conflict from entering a non- cooperative behaviour. The specific administrative devices to resolve the conflicts will not be discussed here since the research aims to provide an understanding on the development of conflict process.

### ***Conflict Aftermath***

Conflict episode is a repeatedly proceeding and cyclized process that constitutes the relationship between the participants. The combination of effects from latent conflict to manifest conflict determines the development of one conflict episode; if a cooperative environment cannot be achieved among different participants, a new episode will be triggered by the legacy of the last episode. Such conflict legacy is termed conflict aftermath by Pondy (1967).

After comparing , I found the normal social process of conflicts and Pondy (1967)'s conflict episode model address a similar process and are in many points compatible with each other, but interpreted in different ways. When looking at two models, a condition-interaction-effect sequence is addressed. And both models demonstrate a cyclized and repeating characteristic.

### ***2.3 Analytical Points***

By studying the normal social process of conflict and the conflict episode model, some focused analytical points that will be used in analysing the case study can be conclude. In general, these analytical points can be categorized in three groups, which form the general conflict development process. (1) It is important to explore what kind of interests or goals do different participants have in the planning process as well as how they are involved in the process. (2) These questions set up the conditions of a conflict development, but these conditions might not directly influence the process in the beginning of the interaction between participants, which is the second analytical group. To understand the conflicts development within an interaction process, three issues have to be investigated: 1. have different participants perceived the conflicts resulted from the implementation of Natura 2000/how do they perceive the conflicts; 2. what their attitudes or emotional feelings toward the conflicts are; and 3. do they take any actions to deal with the conflicts and what kind actions do they take. These three questions and their interrelationships are the crucial elements for understanding how the conflicts develop within an interpersonal and interactive manner. (3) The results of the interactions will be investigated. The results have determinative meaning to the direction of conflict development. These results contain effects of the interaction as well as the first analytical point, which may remain not influential until the interaction is finished. The results can be divided into legacy, which indicates the issues that remain unsolved in the process; and solutions that dealt with the conflict. This analytical point can be turned into new conditions for a new conflict development process.

## 2.4 Conceptual Model

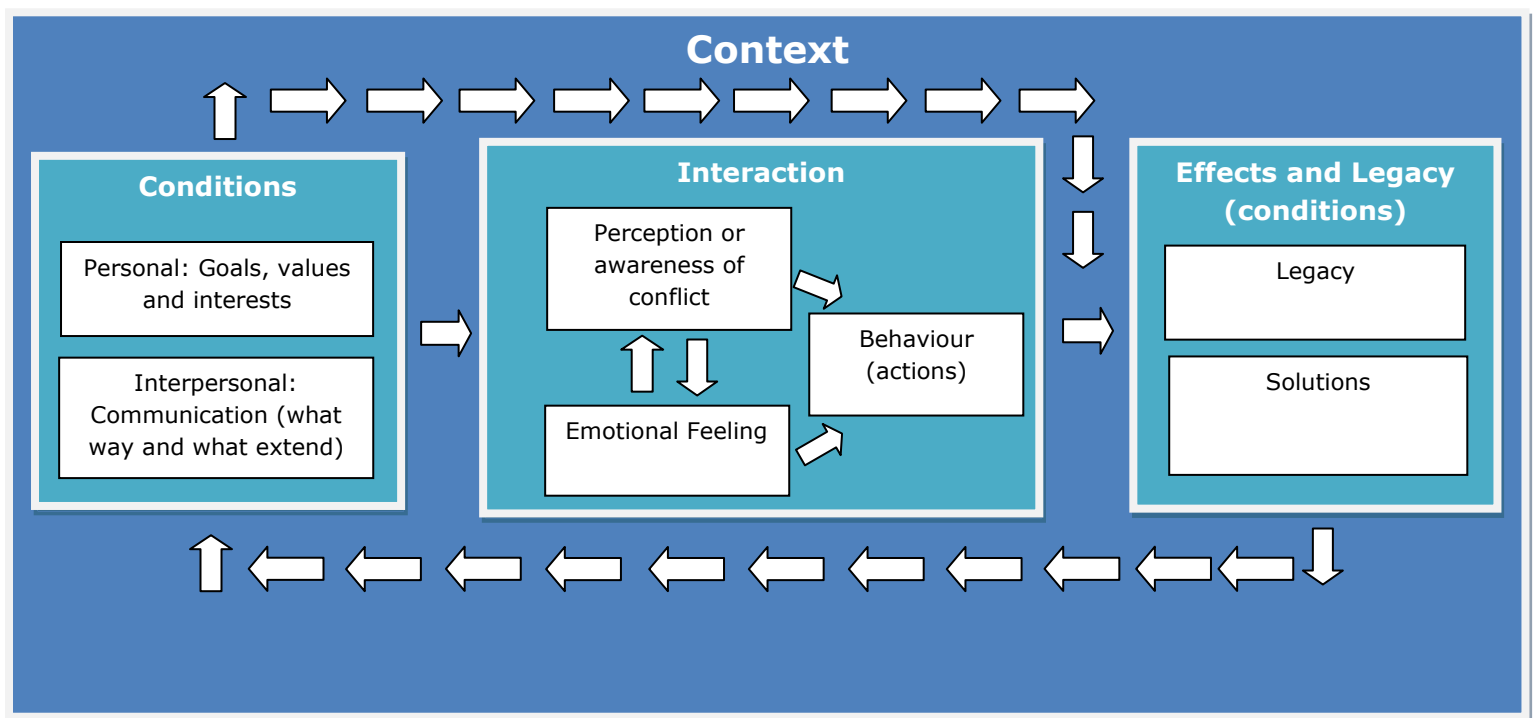


Figure 3. Conceptual Model

By integrating the two models introduced above and their focusing points in this research, a conceptual model is therefore constructed (see figure 3). This conceptual model demonstrates a cyclized process of conflict development. The essential part of this process is the interaction. Such an interactive section is the key section of participatory planning process. The interaction process was also termed by Wall & Callister (1995) as a conflict core process. It contains what Pondy (1967) suggested as 'perceived conflict', 'felt conflict' and 'manifest conflict'. These three types of conflict build up a sequential interaction process. It starts with the perception of different participants in the planning process on the conflicts, in this case, with Natura 2000 policy or other participants. Such perceptions on conflicts are independent of different actors based on individual's understandings or personal values. Then participants also have emotional feelings on the conflicts with Natura 2000 policy or others. In planning practice, such emotional feelings can readily trigger resistance or protest against the decisions. However the perception of party on conflict may not be directly leading to its emotional affection on others (Pondy, 1967). In order to resolve the perceived or felt conflicts, actions would be taken by different participants. The behaviours closely affect the result of the negotiation or interactions process and its extension. The sequence of perception, emotion and behaviour determines the direction of conflict development in the decision making process.

Besides the core process, there are conditions of conflict development. Wall & Callister (1995) defined those conditions as causes of conflicts; while Pondy (1967) suggested those conditions in a different way as latent conflicts, which in other words the conflict potential. It

implies that those conditions might be or not be directly influencing the interaction process. These conditions are personal and interpersonal. In this research the focus will be put on personal interest, value and goals (personal) and communication (interpersonal). Sometimes these latent conflicts may be hidden or not exist before or during the interaction process; and may not be perceived by different participants during the communication with others. And these conflicts can appear in the end of the interaction process. In that case the decision making process would face serious problems resulted from those latent conflicts.

The last part of the framework is the conflict legacy, which is also termed by Pondy (1967) as conflict aftermath. The conflict legacy is a combination of effects of the interaction process and the latent conflicts. The legacy appears in the end of the conflict episode and the beginning of a new episode when the different components in the latent conflicts and interaction process were suppressed but not resolved (Pondy, 1967). As a process, the conflict (episode) development is repeatedly triggered in an organizational relationship (among different participants in a planning decision making process). The new conflict process and possible solutions are determined by the conflict aftermath in the previous sequence only when they remain unsolved. In addition such a combination of effects and legacy can also be resolutions for emerged oppose issues. In that case, the conflict development would be ended up with a cooperative relationship and the satisfaction of all participants involved in the same relationship.

In this research, each element in the three columns, which are the focused analytical points, will be investigated in the case study by interviewing different participants. For each element, some basic questions will be drawn; additionally as described in previous chapter, the interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured way; thus some random questions will be formulated during the interviews. Considering the conflict develops differently within various participants (e.g. different personal perception and understandings of participants on Natura 2000 policy) or a relationship between participants (e.g. interpersonal understandings or communication between participants differ). For example, some participants would have perceived conflicts and were strongly provoked; then relevant actions might have been taken in order to solve the conflicts; while some of them might feel that it was unnecessary and pointless to take any action; or a divergence of goals might or might not explode and generate oppose affection or behaviours. By conducting the interviews, the abstractions of conflict developments within different relationships among participants can be clearly elaborated. By analysing the progresses, the directions of each conflict development process can be generally clarified. And some issues which contains serious opposition will be identified; and in order to result in deliberative facilitation or further research. However, this research aims to provide a clear understanding on such a conflict complexity and identify those important issues that might significantly affect the decision making of Natura 2000 policy; and the resolution for those (potential) problematic issues will not be discussed here.

### 3. Case Study

*After introducing the subject and constructing a theoretical framework, the research moves to the real practice. The Natura 2000 site 'floodplain of Lower Rhine' (Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn) is chosen as the study area. In the first section, current Dutch spatial planning context is given. In section 3.2, general context of Natura 2000 and Natura 2000 in the Netherlands is introduced. In Section 3.3 the basic description of River Rhine and Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is given. In section 3.4 the historic and political context that the area is in is elaborated. Section 3.5 elaborates the designation process of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. In section 3.6 and 3.7 the information collected by interviewing different stakeholders involved in the planning process is presented and analysed by the theoretical framework established in chapter 2.*

#### **3.1 Current Dutch Spatial Planning Context**

In last decade, Dutch spatial planning system faced a lot problems relating to its legitimacy and effectiveness (Wolsink, 2002; Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000). The conventional government-centred planning system in the Netherlands was found insufficient to address adequate consideration on societal issues and stakeholder/public interests when a new context of planning, namely 'network society', occurred (Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000). At that time the level of participation in the Dutch spatial planning, referring to Arnstein(1969)'s participation ladder, was just as low as an informing and consulting level (Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000). Such a new context requires new practices that allow variety of stakeholders as knowledgeable actors in the planning process (Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000). Until nowadays the Netherlands has experienced participatory planning for a long period. Lots of relevant methods for stakeholder participation have been experimented, formalized and applied in Dutch planning policy making and practices. At the institutional level, according to the new Dutch National Spatial Strategy adopted in 2006, the emphasis was put on approaches to different government control (Vind and Van der Burg, 2006). The state government has compromised its former role of controlling over the decision making in the planning process unless state interests are at stake (Vind and Van der Burg, 2006). Instead, it provides general guidelines for the facilitation and coordination of the planning process and its management. Therefore more executive power and responsibilities of making policy and plan were decentralized to the provinces and the municipalities. And the decisions are made in association with local stakeholders.

#### **3.2 Natura 2000 and Natura 2000 in the Netherlands**

Natura 2000 is an EU-wide ecological network of nature conservation areas existing in all 27 EU Member States (CEC, 2002). This network was formally established under the EU Habitat Directive (1992) and the Bird Directive (1979) (CEC, 2002). Respectively Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated under the Habitat Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated under the Bird Directive (EC, 2011). Together SAC and SPAs form the Natura 2000 ecological network. This ecological network policy aims to prevent the



biodiversity loss all over European Union and to safeguard the increasingly threatened species and the habitats they live in in order to assure the long-term survival of these species and habitats (CEC, 2002). Over 2,500 sites have been included in the Natura 2000 network by the end of 2008 and cover around 18% of the land (800,000 km<sup>2</sup>) of the EU plus 100,000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine environment (EC, 2009). Nevertheless this network is still under development. However, such a large-scale nature conservation project has potential impacts on many existing social and economic activities at local level. Such activities on the other hand guarantee the development of the region and success of the network. Therefore in order to balance such dynamic, the ECNC argues that great care should be put in involving different stakeholders in the management of Natura 2000 site (ECNC, 2010). As stated in the project report of EU regarding dealing with conflicts in the management and implementation of Natura 2000, stakeholder participation is an essential component of a successful management plan specifically at local level (ECNC, 2010). It is also stated in the report that a lot of conflicts were generated within stakeholder participation; and these conflicts in most of the cases stem from competitive interests of different stakeholders and consultations, time, trust and consideration on the opinions of key stakeholders were insufficiently taken into account in the implementation process (ECNC, 2010).

Unexceptionally the Netherlands also has to implement Natura 2000 policy under the EU context. By the latest data reported by the Regie Bureau Natura 2000, 166 Natura 2000 sites varying between 30 to 300 ha in size and 4 maritime areas off the coast have been designated in the Netherlands (see figure 4) (Regie Bureau Natura 2000, 2011; Ministry EL&I, 2011). The total areas of Natura 2000 sites in the Netherlands are approximately 1 million hectares (Beunen *et al*, 2009). The areas cover approximately 13% of the surface area of the Netherlands (Ferranti *et al*, 2010). And 69% of the areas are water and the rest of 31% are land (RegieBureau Natura 2000, 2011). The Netherlands has a long tradition of nature conservation with its own intricate and consolidated conservation system before the introduction of Natura 2000 policy. The first conservation organization in the Netherlands was founded in late nineteenth century (Ferranti *et al*, 2010). With the formulation of the second Nature Policy Plan with the title 'Nature for people; People for nature' in 2000 and a 'comprehensive integrated approach', by which objectives of different domains were integrated, the Dutch nature conservation system was characterized as attempting to find balance between conservation objectives and negotiation with landowner (Ferranti *et al*, 2010). Such characteristics position the Netherlands as a pioneer of nature conservation within European Union and are also coherent with the idea behind Natura 2000.



Figure 4. Current Nature 2000 sites in the Netherlands.

The ring symbol indicates situation of designation of these Natura 2000 sites (white: not yet be designated; blue: designated; green: designation accomplished). The spot symbol indicates the progress of formulating management plan (white: process has not started; orange: process has initiated; blue: formulation is in process; green: management plan accomplished). (Regie Bureau Natura 2000, 2011)

In spite of its comprehensiveness, such an intricate system also complicated the designation process and management of nature conservation sites (Van der Valk, 2002). It also slowed down the decision making in many nature conservation and spatial planning projects. Such disadvantage was also manifested in the Natura 2000 project.

For the Netherlands, although gained a great reputation as pioneer in EU based on such a comprehensive integrated regime, Dutch government was not willing to adjust its existing nature conservation system when a Natura 2000 policy was carried out at EU level and was imposed at local level. As stated in the studies about implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives in the Netherlands, both directives were not taken into account in many planning projects (Beunen, 2006). The information about both directives was quite limited

among different stakeholders at that time. The directives started to receive attention in the Netherlands, specifically at local or site level since a nature organization protested against the construction of a new business park in Heerlen by appealing the Habitat Directive (Ferranti *et al*, 2010; Beunen, 2010). Since then relevant cases increasingly occurred as lawsuits in the court. But relevant researches showed that although were delayed, most of those protested projects still continued since there was indeed a increasing awareness of the directives; and actors paid attention on the procedural necessity of involving the directives in their projects. (Beunen *et al*, 2009, 2010; Ferranti *et al*, 2010). However, the interpretation of the European directives in the Netherlands is emphasized on the formal aspects instead of more substantial aspects. This as well as the legal enforcement of European Commission led to great uncertainties about the consequences of the European directive to the existing local social and economic activities in and around designated Natura 2000 sites. Although the European Commission took legal actions to enforce the designations of Natura 2000 sites, a great deal of oppositions raised among stakeholders because of the scientific basis of the designation of the sites which resulted in less influence of local stakeholders; and also because of their fear on the uncertain consequences for their own activities in and around designated Natura 2000 sites. As Beunen (2010) argued, a prevailing idea among Dutch actors is that European directives frustrate almost every development of the Netherlands.

In order to tackle the problems in the implementation of Natura 2000, Dutch government provide a formulation of management plan. Along with the Netherlands, other member states also formulated management plan, which are differently emphasized and interpreted. A management plan in the Netherlands needs to provide clarity about the conservation goal, necessary management actions and the consequences of designation of Natura 2000 site for other forms of land use and activities in and around the site (Beunen, 2010). The last term was not specifically described by EU. The preparation of the management is formulated and based on consultation to all stakeholders including administrators, site users, landowners, nature organizations and water boards (Regie Bureau Natura 2000. 2011). In spite of this, the possibilities for the local stakeholders to participate in the planning process are limited in most of the cases since the planning process was organized with a small experts group supervised by government organizations or site managers and the emphasis of the management plan is put on scientific and technocrat aspects (Beunen, 2010). This fact actually limited quite some space for discussion and negotiation with the local stakeholders. Even if participated, most of the time the stakeholders used the meeting to voice their criticisms about Natura 2000 and planning process; and the responsible authorities consulted the stakeholders only for collecting basic information about the activities in and around Natura 2000 sites (Beunen *et al*, 2010). This fact showed that although landowners and land users were consulted when designating Natura 2000 sites and formulating management plan, the different interests of different participants were not efficiently addressed; and the uncertainties of the European directives, such as the consequences of Natura 2000 policy, that might influence those interests were not clarified, although this is

the main focus of managing Natura 2000 sites in the Netherlands. In addition to the limited space for participation, the hesitated consideration between the existing decision and the new requirements from the directives slowed down the planning process. This decreased the trust from the interests groups in the process (Beunen *et al*, 2010).

In general the involvement of both directives creates the tension between nature conservation objectives and social and economic activities in the existing planning decisions and process in a Natura 2000 site. Not only stakeholders who greatly care and fear about the unknown consequences of the directives on their own activities , but also planning decision makers who concern the influence of the new requirements on the existing projects, are confronting with a great deal of uncertainties and frustration. As Beunen *et al* (2010) suggests, the decision making process and communication between different actors become much complicated due to the presence of the uncertainties and the attention on formal aspects resulted from the Birds and Habitats Directives. But more attention should be put on the communication and negotiation between government and other stakeholders rather than on the ecological contents and conservation objectives (Beunen *et al*, 2010). Thus this study aims to go deep into public/stakeholder participation in a planning process in Natura 2000 sites in the Netherlands; more specifically into the conflicts within the decision making process; to inquire different perceptions among different actors; therefore to analyse the conflicts between different interests and the way they are involved in the negotiation process; and also provide a further understanding on the conflict and its own developing process with the planning process.

### 3.3 Site description

River Rhine originates in Alps of Switzerland over Altitude of 2000m (Van der Brink *et al*, 1996; Wolters *et al*, 2001). It flows through Switzerland, Germany, France and The Netherlands (Figure 5). It enters the Netherlands from Lobith and discharges into the North Sea. The river basin of River Rhine is fed by the glaciers of Alp and by the precipitation in the downstream (Wolters *et al*, 2001). Neder-Rijn is one of the three branches of River Rhine in the Netherlands and discharges 21% of the water (Van der Brink *et al*, 1996). Other two branches are Waal and IJssel (Raaijmakers, 2001).

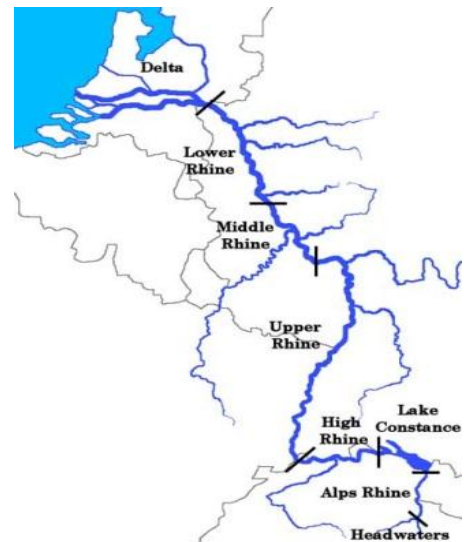


Figure 5. Route of River Rhine

(Ontherhine, n.d)

Just as its name suggests, Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn (see figure 6) means Floodplain of Lower Rhine. The study area is situated along the downstream area of River Rhine through the municipality of Renkum, Wageningen in Province of Gelderland eastward to the municipality of Rhenen, Amerongen, Wijk bij Duurstede in Province of Utrecht (see figure 7). Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is initially proposed as a Natura 2000 site by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation (Ministry LNV, nowadays Ministry of EL&I). And the plan for the area has been published on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2008. The draft for its designation was inspected from 11<sup>th</sup> September to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2008. Presently the formulation of management plan has been in process and the final designation is not completed yet (Ministry EL&I, 2011). The designation process of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn will be elaborated in section 3.3.



Figure 6. Location Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn

(Regie Bureau Natura 2000, 2011)

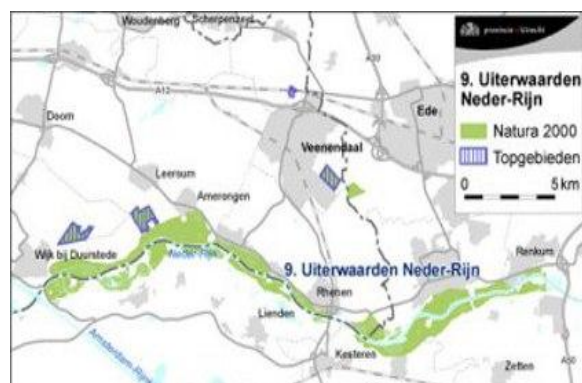


Figure 7. Map of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn

(Province of Utrecht, 2011)



Figure 8. Cows on the Uiterwaarden Wageninge of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn



Figure 9. Typical Landscape in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn

The total are of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is about 3.3 ha (Ministry EL&I, 2011). It is a small dynamic and forced branch of River Rhine with a relatively elevated meadow. This area is partly for agricultural use (see figure 8) and partly for nature development (see figure 9). Due to the high water level, many parts of the floodplain are pretty wet. It is resulted from



the inflow of the seepage water from the moraines. The floodplain area of Lower Rhine is of considerable nature value for both birds and habitat. The wet grasslands, marshes and ancient watercourses are key components of the floodplain. And these areas are perfect habitats for foraging geese, ducks and grassland birds (see figure 10) (Ministry EL&I, 2011). In Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, larger ponds (see figure 11) serve as resting places for ducks and geese, among which White-fronted goose, Geylag goose and Widgeon are most common species; the former numerous Pochards are significantly decreasing in number (Ministry EL&I, 2011).



Figure 10. Geese in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn



Figure 11. One of the water ponds in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn

### ***3.4 Historic and Political Context***

To understand the context in which the study area is in, it is crucial to understand the concept of 'floodplain' ('uiterwaarden'). The floodplain area, according to Junk et al (1989), is defined as areas that are periodically inundated by the lateral overflow of rivers or lakes, and/or by direct precipitation or groundwater. They have termed it as the "aquatic/terrestrial transition zone" since it alternates between aquatic and terrestrial environments (Junk et al, 1989). The floodplains are among the most valuable ecosystems in the world and contain high biodiversity and most threatened habitats. Such nature and ecological values rely on the geomorphological transitional position between the hinterland and the river channels (Addink et al, n.d). Such a geomorphic identity provides ecosystem rich gradients leading to high biodiversity (Addink et al, n.d). In the Netherlands the floodplains have double but contradictory functions. On the one hand the floodplains provide perfect nesting habitats for birds and other species and support the nature and recreation development (see figure 12); on the other hand guarantee the safety of inhabitants living in the hinterland during the peak discharge period (see figure 13) (Addink et al, n.d).



Figure 12. Floodplain on the other side of the dike



Figure 13. Dike between residential area and floodplain

Dutch people have been struggling with river flooding since centuries. The Dutch part of River Rhine was characterized as purely nature until early Middle Age when the agricultural development and dyke construction just began. The earliest construction of dyke to prevent the flooding was accomplished in around 1450. Since then the areas with a flooding risk during the peak river discharge were confined to a new zone (Raaijmakers, 2001). The floodplains were enclosed by low dykes to prevent the flood in the summer time and to create meadows and hayfields (Raaijmakers, 2001).

As introduced above, the management of floodplains, such as Neder-Rijn, has to deal with both river safety and nature conservation objectives. Within the political context at EU level, the Dutch main river system is subject to EU policies for water management and nature conservation, respectively the Bird and Habitat Directives and the Water Framework Directive that resulted in Natura 2000 network throughout the EU member countries (Van der Meij et al, 2004). At national level, the Dutch government has also carried out national policies for both nature conservation and water management. With the impact of climate change in the 1990s, more specifically both increasing sea level and melt water from the mountain Alps, the Dutch river system faces significant flooding risk. Until the 1993 and 1995 floods, the measure for water management was raising the dikes. But this approach soon showed its limits. Therefore the National Water Authority *Rijkswaterstaat* started to create alternative approaches for water safety in the Dutch river system. In the policy level instead of reinforcing the river dikes, creating more space for river flows was considered as a more appropriate approach. Eventually the Spatial Planning key Decision (PKB) 'Room for the River' (*Ruimte voor de Rivier*) was carried out cooperatively by three ministries and five provinces in the year of 2000 (Van der Meij et al, 2004; Warner et al, 2006). In this programme policies for water and nature coexist. The programme addresses measures such as '*creating side channels; restoring flood plains; restoring meanders in the river; assigning areas for controlled flooding in case of emergencies and re-locating dikes*' (Warner et al, 2006). The Dutch government aims to complete the programme of 'Room for the River' by the year of 2015.

In the field of nature conservation, the idea of nature policy in the Netherlands is subject to the Nature Policy Plan (Beunen & Hagens, 2009; Ferranti et al, 2010), which was firstly published in 1990. The essence of the Nature Policy Plan is the creation of National



Ecological Main Network (*EHS, Ecologische Hoofdstructuur*) (see figure 14), which aims to protect, restore and develop nature and landscape to and combat the causes of their decline (Ferranti et al, 2010). The EHS consists of 'core areas', which are existing valuable nature areas and were brought from private owners and transformed into special protection areas, nature development areas as potential valuable areas and other portions as 'ecological corridors' between core areas of EHS (Beunen & Hagens, 2009; Ferranti et al, 2010). The provincial, municipal governments and water boards are responsible for the implementation and realization of the Ecological Main Network. After its publication, EHS as the key concept of Dutch nature conservation had been included in many policy and planning documents. In addition, the publication of the second Nature Policy Plan in 2000 aimed to bring society in the decision making process and to create consensus among different stakeholders (Ferranti et al, 2010). Despite of its popularity and relative transparency, the ambiguity of the concept of EHS generated a lot of discussion in the planning process since different people perceived and interpreted it differently with various meanings to their own interests. This made difficulties for the realization of the programme. Although delays of projects, the existing Dutch nature conservation system is based on a comprehensive and sophisticated institution; and the operation of the Ecological Main Structure is progressing stably. And the Dutch government aims to complete this programme by the year of 2018.

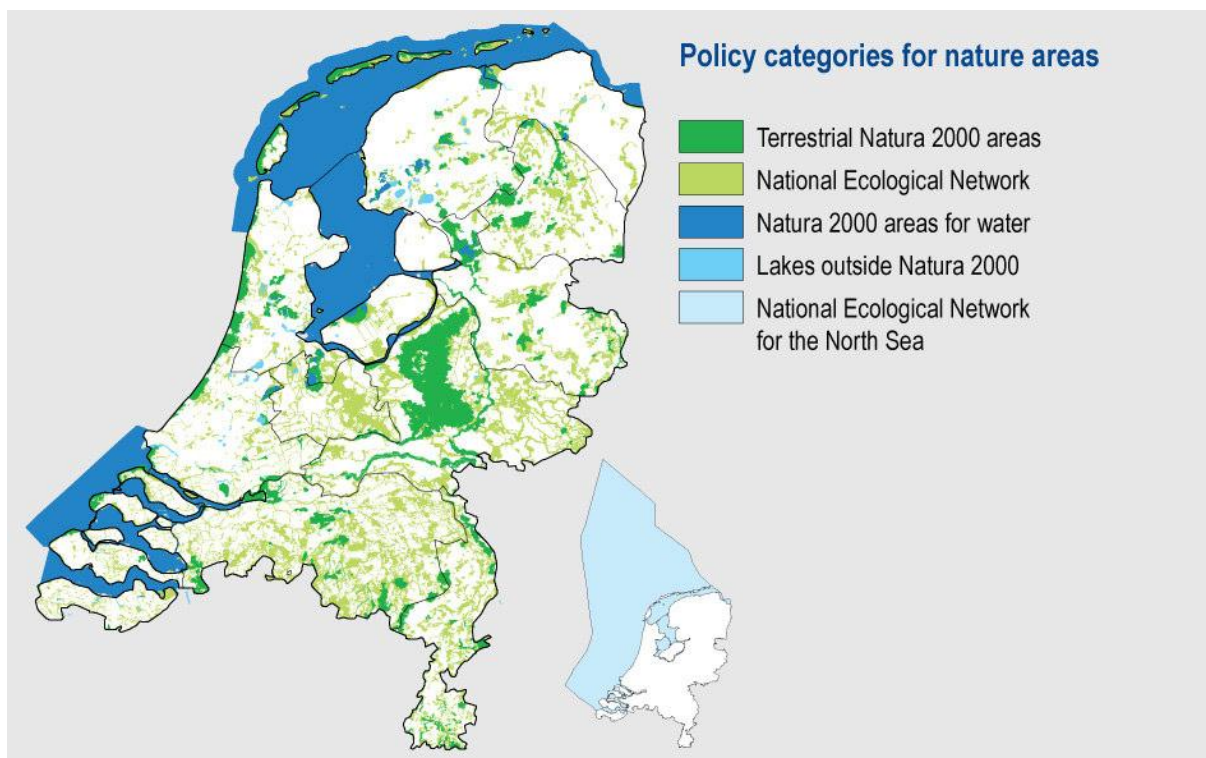


Figure 14. Natura 2000 and National Ecological Network in the Netherlands

(Notenboom et al, 2006)

The area Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, due to its special location, embarks both nature conservation and water safety issues. Although both water management and nature

conservation policies are progressively operated in the site and are in many points enforcing each other, in the meanwhile they may encounter each other (Van der Meij, 2004). Together with Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, there are other four floodplains locating along different branches of River Rhine (Rijntakken), respectively Gelderse Poort, Uiterwaarden van de IJssel, Uiterwaarden van de Waal en Loevestein (see figure 15). And these floodplains with different characteristics and functions are designated as Natura 2000 sites. The management of these sites are cooperatively by the Ministry of EL&I, Rijkswaterstaat and the Provincial Executive Authorities of Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel. According to the interview with both Province of Gelderland, which was engaged in implementing National Ecological Main Structure and Rijkswaterstaat, which was conducting 'room for the rivers' in the past decade, both national policies worked and progressed well in the past decade. The carry-out of Natura 2000 policy did not actually attract much attention from both authorities in the first place (ten years ago) since the EHS and Natura 2000 have similar objectives and RWS also had ambitions on nature conservation. And the Netherlands was still insisting and trusting its existing nature conservation system (Ferranti et al, 2010). But with the widespread introduction of Natura 2000 and its high level enforcement, the confrontations occurred. In spite of seemingly similar goals, the specific requirements of Natura 2000 (e.g. protected species) are different from those in National Nature Policy and water management, in which some agreements have been reached in the local level. These contradictions brought lots of uncertainties and complication to the responsible authorities to coordinate the planning process since critiques and question raised from public and different stakeholders at local level concerning the consequences of Natura 2000 policy. At political level, an approach of creating balance between nature conservation and water management is still under discussion.



Figure 15. Five Natura 2000 sites along Rijntakken

(Province of Gelderland, 2008)

### ***3.5 Designation Process of Natura 2000 site Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn***

The information in this section is collected by the interview with the Provincial Authority of Gelderland since most of the information concerning the designation process is written in Dutch. During the 1990s, the commitments on nature conservation in the Netherlands were attached to the establishment and implementation of National Ecological Main Structure. In the year of 2000, many areas in Province of Gelderland with ecological value and biodiversity loss crisis were designated as Natura 2000 sites under the European Bird Directive alone. That was the first designation of the nature conservations sites under the European Natura 2000 policy. The designation addressed several issues including the boundaries of each

conservation site, the reasons for designation and species to be protected within the area. But at that time there was no specific nature conservation goal formulated.

In the year of 2005, with the influence of the Natura 2000 policy the current Dutch National Nature Conservation Law was implemented. In the year 2007 and 2008 further designations of Natura 2000-sites were started in order to bind to requirements of EU policy (the designation of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn was started in 2008). And thereby most of those nature conservation sites were re-designated under both EU Bird Directive and Habitat Directive and the new national conservation law in order to prevent biodiversity loss in those areas (some of the areas were designated under either BD or HD alone). During the designation process two important consultations were organized by the national authority (ministry of LNV) relevant publications were available to the public.

The consultation process was different in 2000 and in 2008. In 2000 the consultation didn't have a broad reach among the public. It was aiming to introduce Natura 2000 policy to the involved stakeholders and locals. But there weren't many reactions for the policy but only administrative issues because specific conservation goals, measures and consequences were not specified. In the year of 2008, after an informal consultation with key stakeholders and administrations, an official announcement was published by the national authority. The announcement contained a more specific range of information including relevant nature conservation concepts in the Natura 2000 sites, a draft designation, and detailed arguments for designating the sites and conservation goals for both Bird and Habitat Directives. Also new formal consultation was organized: the announcement was available for commenting for six weeks. At that time, a lot of questions were raised from stakeholders, local inhabitants and some companies in the sites. From stakeholders in the Province of Gelderland alone, the ministry of LNV had received approximately 1500 reactions. Those reactions revealed that most the locals were frustrated by the uncertain consequences of Natura 2000 policy, which were addressed in the announcement at an abstract level with only some procedural explanation notes. Some of the companies even showed the distrust to the national authority on the ground that they doubted their interests were not seriously taken into account in the designation process.

The Provincial authority of Gelderland played a role as one of the key stakeholders in the designation process; more importantly it is responsible for formulating a management plan for each designated Natura 2000 site in Gelderland including Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. Before the introduction of Natura 2000 policy, the provincial authority was engaged in the management of National Ecological Main Structure. Comparing both policies, it was found that both policies actually address similar objectives concerning biodiversity and nature conservation. But the approaches of implementing both policies were significantly different. Natura 2000 policy follows a top-down approach and was strictly delegated to member countries; while the approach of Ecological Main Structure was relatively more flexible. A lot of negotiation processes happens between the province and the locals during the

implementation of ecological network. Natura 2000 policy in the Netherlands is actually interpreted with its legislative identity. Different from concrete development concerning Ecological Main Structure, the discussion concerning Natura 2000 policy was mainly on its legal terms. Besides, both policies have different focuses, for example protected species or habitats.

For the floodplain areas along River Rhine including Neder-Rijn as well as those in province of Utrecht and Overijssel, the situation was even more complicated. Such complication to a large extent was resulted from the involvement of water management, which puts great attention on safety issues. To deal with those issues, a lot of measures were taken by the ministry of infrastructure and environment. Thus comparing to water management, less effort was contributed to nature conservation. Although at policy level, both nature conservation and water management are effectively integrated to realize a balance between safety and nature value in floodplain areas, in practice the prioritization of water management causes the delay of nature conservation since measures for water management were given higher priority. In addition, the national authority (Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment) placed remarkable intervention in managing the ecological network in the floodplains. Thus a great deal of discussion between authorities was generated. These issues caused delay in the designation process of Natura 2000 sites along the river. The province of Gelderland adopted it's planning to formulate management plan. Up to present, the designation for the Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is not yet completed.

However, the province held a relatively positive attitude in dealing with such complex situation. The provincial authority of Gelderland (in corporation with other provincial authorities) took the initiative to request for stronger executive power bottom-up influence on the designation process from the Dutch Parliament. Considering responding the large amount of public reactions to the official announcement, the province decided to start formulating the management plan before the designation was finished; and different meetings was organized and particular website was constructed to provide clarity about Natura 2000 policy for the locals. Besides, the province had already perceived latent tensions that might occur between Natura 2000 and existing economic and social activities. Instead of removing those activities, the provincial authority was attempting to search for a sustainable approach to build up a balance between nature conservation objectives and local economic and social activities.

According to the description above, it is evident that the complexity of the decision making and relevant conflicts have resulted in the delay of the designation of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn and other Natura 2000 sites in Province of Gelderland. Back to the subject of this research, these conflicts and their developments and relationship within the designation and management process of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn will be elaborated and analysed in section 3.5.



### ***3.6 Interview Data Collection***

It's been four years since Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn was designated as a Natura 2000 sites. The significant impact of Natura 2000 policy on Dutch nature conservation policies and in this case water management as well as considerable comments from local stakeholders, NGOs and citizens has strongly decelerated the designation process in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn and other Natura 2000 sites in the Netherlands; thereby the formulation of management plan was delayed. However, the specific details of planning and decision making process in the area were not elaborated in the publications. Therefore in order to understand the conflicts among different actors in the process, which is one of the obstacles to a smooth planning process, more specifically saying how did the conflict trigger and develop and result in a sequence, relevant information are explored by conducting interviews with different participants in the process.

In this research, three groups of interviewees, namely responsible authorities, local stakeholders and residents involved in the project of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn are selected. As has been mentioned earlier, the formulation of interview questions is based on the conceptual framework established in the theory chapters. As a result, two responsible authorities (also as important stakeholders): Provincial Authority of Gelderland and Rijkswaterstaat accepted the interview. In the local level, the Municipality of Wageningen has responded interview request. But no interview conversation was organized and the message was not informative. In addition seven local residents live along the Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn in Wageningen accepted the interview. The residents group was randomly selected. Unfortunately none of the local stakeholders either accepted or responded the interview request.

### ***3.7 Results Analysis***

In this section, the interview results are presented and analysed in the order of a conflict development process.

#### ***3.7.1 Conditions***

According to the interview with the project official of Province of Gelderland, the Provincial Authority aims to implement the National Ecological Main Structure (EHS) that was carried out in 1990s. Actually the implementation practice is delegated to the municipalities involved in the planning process. In policy level, the Province of Gelderland and the EU nature policy (Natura 2000) address the same goal, which is preventing biodiversity loss in nature areas. To implement the EHS, the nature areas need to be enlarged. For doing so, the province purchases lands from local private land owners and compensate their lost. During the communication process, the province is the main executive authority, which is responsible in formulating the management plan after the designation process. It provides relevant information to the stakeholders and public group and response to the questions concerning Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) is executive arm of the Dutch

Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment. The goal of Rijkswaterstaat is focused on water management and water safety. As has been discussed earlier, the approach of increasing water safety in the river is to create more space for rivers in order to prevent flooding in case of peak discharge. Thus the space needs to be preserved from the floodplains. RWS expects fewer plants in the floodplain that would be the obstacle for a smooth water flow. However, as the officer from Rijkswaterstaat introduced, Rijkswaterstaat has less responsibility in the execution in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn than it does in other water systems. In this case Rijkswaterstaat plays a role of stakeholder that provides important information about the river system. In the communication process, Rijkswaterstaat discusses with province and the ministry in order to find the solution to coordinate balance between nature conservation and water management. In addition it communicates with local residents about the water issues.

According to the interviews with local residents, Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is obviously an indispensable location for enjoying nature, watching birds and other activities. But none of the interviewees has been involved in the decision making process.

### **3.7.2 Core Process**

#### *Perception on Conflicts*

The Provincial Authority perceived the conflicts with Natura 2000 as well as water policy in practice. Actually at policy level, Natura 2000 and EHS have a same objective, which is protecting biodiversity; and the designated protection sites in the Netherlands are highly matching. But in practice both policies have significant differences in specific issues, for example, the protected species are different or the philosophies to realize the policies are different. Comparing to EHS, Natura 2000 policy addresses a more strict identity in its implementation, which is shown in the fact that the interpretation of Natura 2000 in the Netherlands focuses on legal perspective. It has been included in the new Dutch Nature Conservation Law; and projects in Natura 2000 sites are forced to bind to the legal issues of the policy (e.g. the project permit contains issues in Natura 2000 policy), even though the meaning and consequence of the policy is not clarified to stakeholders. This means that Natura 2000 contains a strong legal status and enforcement. But the specific approach and consequence it may cause were not elaborated in the policy. This results in difficulties in its implementation. As the officer introduced, large amount of questions and critiques were raised up from different participants during the consultation sessions. And the province perceived the ambiguity and different meanings of Natura 2000 has on the local level. In addition due to its strong legal enforcement, its legal issue of the policy are prioritized in its implementation instead of solid approaches. When it comes to the Spatial Planning Key Decision 'Room for Rivers', the province perceived that the policy would enforce the realization of nature conservation at policy level. But in practice these two policies work against each other. For example, Natura 2000 or EHS claims for more trees in the protected area in order to attract more species; while in the water policy trees are considered as

obstacles that occupy the space for water; thereby slow down the water flow. It would prevent the peak discharge from relieving.

For Rijkswaterstaat, the conflict resulted from Natura 2000 was not perceived in the first place when it was just carried out by the European Union Commission. At that time nature conservation was also involved in the goals of Rijkswaterstaat. Thus it perceived Natura 2000 as effective instrument to enforce nature conservation. But nowadays the implementations of Natura 2000 as well as spatial planning projects it was involved in gradually become complicated due to the vagueness of Natura 2000 (specific approaches and consequences of implementing Natura 2000). As the officer argued, Natura 2000 policy has been included into the nature conservation law. Similar to the explanation of the province, Rijkswaterstaat perceives the legal status of Natura 2000 policy as an obstacle (e.g. more trees are required in Natura 2000 policy to conserve biodiversity; while water management claims for less space for trees) for their current work. The new project permits involving standards concerning Natura 2000 are difficult to apply since many existing projects do not concern issues included in Natura 2000. This resulted in great delays in local water management project. Rijkswaterstaat also perceived the conflict with EHS.

Most of the citizen interviewees have heard about Natura 2000 policy; but their knowledge about Natura 2000 is insufficient. Due to a superficial understanding on Natura 2000, local residents living along Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn do not perceive much conflict with this policy. Nowadays there is hardly any project taking place on the site. Only one interviewee perceived it as a risk to the farmers and as an obstacle to water management.

### Emotional Feelings on Conflicts

The Provincial Authority of Gelderland did not directly demonstrate their attitude toward Natura 2000 policy. But a complication of the implementing Natura 2000 was mentioned. It appears in the interview that the introduction of Natura 2000 brings extra work to the province. The province was struggling with limited time to formulate the management plans as well as to response a great deal of question from the locals and stakeholders concerning Natura 2000. In addition, the emphasis of legislative issues generates difficulties for the provincial authority to conduct concrete actions for Natura 2000 in the same time guarantee a smooth execution of EHS. And the top-down characteristic of Natura 2000 policy limits the flexibility of decision making process under existing Dutch nature conservation system. The Rijkswaterstaat has turned its positive attitude toward Natura 2000 in 10 years ago to 'risky'. Nowadays nature conservation is not the main goal of Rijkswaterstaat anymore. As mentioned earlier, Rijkswaterstaat mainly works as a stakeholder and information provider in the planning process in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. Thus it can be imagined that water safety is still its main focus in floodplains areas. In addition the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, to which Rijkswaterstaat belongs, pays less attention on Natura 2000 policy. And Natura 2000 policy does not consider climate change, which is a great concern of water



safety. Nevertheless both Provincial Authority of Gelderland and Rijkswaterstaat are positive toward the confrontation of their works as well as the frustrations from the locals.

Most of the local residents agree that Natura 2000 is an effective instrument to protect the nature area in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. And they believe that Natura 2000 has been perfectly organized the nature and bring species to nature. Two of the interviewees showed the opinions that the governmental organizations almost dominant the management of the Natura 2000 site; but they as local residents should also be part of the process and can well manage the area.

### *Behaviours on Conflicts*

The ambiguity of Natura 2000 and the political discussion on nature and water policies have resulted in a delay in the designation of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn as Natura 2000 site. The large amount of critiques from the stakeholders and the public bring extra time pressure to the Province of Gelderland in formulating the management plan, which is supposed to be started after the designation process. Thus the province asked the State Council for an earlier start of making management plan (before the designation process accomplishes) and more executive power in the process; therefore the province will have extra time to respond the comments from the public; besides, the province also asked the Ministry of EL&I for more detailed information about the explanation of Natura 2000 policy to communicate with stakeholders and local residents.

Rijkswaterstaat also conducts communicative approach in dealing with the conflicts. For the conflict between nature conservation and water management, RWS consults with both ministry in the higher level and the Province of Gelderland to search for proper locations for the solution. And some of goals and standard of Rijkswaterstaat are lowered during the discussion (e.g. disliked species). The negotiation is also conducted between Rijkswaterstaat and local residents. Facing the frustration from the local residents, RWS listens to and communicates with the residents and consult on what the problem is and what do the residents want.

Until nowadays most of the citizen interviewees have not taken any actions against Natura 2000 because they are in general positive to Natura 2000 policy.

### **3.7.3 Conflict Legacy and Effects**

Up to nowadays, the designation of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is not yet accomplished. There are still many issues remaining unsolved. For example, the most remarkable remaining issue in this research is the conflict between protecting nature quality and improving water safety. And the citizens' oppositions to Natura 2000 potentially exist. This conflict is still under political discussions between the ministries, the Province of Gelderland and Rijkswaterstaat as well as other nature and environment organizations. Specific details about negotiation process and decisions were not mentioned in the interview. But according to the responses

from both Provincial Authority and Rijkswaterstaat, the situation is controlled under cooperative manner at least at governmental level. Additionally the official in Rijkswaterstaat, both authorities has compromised some standards on certain issues. Thus in spite of practical confrontation, actually there is not negative affection or disputation occurred. For the purchased lands for either nature conservation or water management, both authorities choose to compensate the loss of local land owners. According to Rijkswaterstaat, the negotiation in most of the cases were accepted and *'if the communication and compensation does not work, legal instrument would be taken'*. And RWS also believes that *'people would eventually understand if they see the water floods to their backyards'*.

Although the interviewed residents have fairly positive attitude toward Natura 2000 and the current situation in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, it doesn't mean the progress would be peaceful and smooth. According to the interviews, it reveals that the conflict is just not triggered yet. The responses of the residents have shown a potentially serious opposition to Natura 2000. Particularly when they heard the question 'what if your place would be reserved for enlargement of nature conservation or water storage', the interviewees strongly reacted. It is shown that most of the interviewee would not agree with the proceeding work of Natura 2000 if their interests were disturbed.

### 3.7.4 Conclusion of Interview Results

Based on nine interviews in total, a general picture about conflicts among different groups of participants was constructed. The interview results have been elaborated in the table in the appendix (see appendix interview results). Taking an overview on the interview results, both responsible authorities and residents group have interests concerning nature in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. The interests of the authorities are focusing on protecting biodiversity and water safety in the area. And these interests are strictly and legally bind to Natura 2000 policy and Dutch national water policy. While the interests of the residents are private and personal. People do not actually have strict standard on what the nature should look like or what kind of species should be living in the area. Thus the objectives of both authorities in some points have fulfilled those interests of the residents. But both groups have completely different perceptions on Natura 2000 policy. The policy has remarkable impact to existing work of the authorities, namely the EHS and 'room for rivers'. Both authorities perceived it as potential risk. Much pressure has been brought to the authorities, especially to the Provincial Authority of Gelderland who is responsible for formulating management plan. Although the interviews were not successfully provided, according to the conversation with both authorities, Natura 2000 brought difficulties to some important stakeholders, like the farmer organization or some project organizations, since some of the projects on the site were delayed; and the agricultural activities were limited. But for the residents, Natura 2000 is a fairly effective instrument to organize the nature area, which is highly appreciated. Most of them agree that Natura 2000 brings peaceful nature and a great deal of species to them. Thus most of the interviewed residents have no further actions or

behaviours on Natura 2000 policy; and the current situation is acceptable. Until the present, the designation of process of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn is not accomplished. The conflict between nature conservation and water management is still under political discussion among the Province of Gelderlands and Rijkswaterstaat and authorities at higher governmental level. While according to the interview results, the opinions of the residents on Natura 2000 are partly reserved. And all of the interviewees demonstrated that if Natura 2000 would have further impact to their own places due to the possible enlargement of nature conservation or if some the activities (recreational activities) would be forced to remove, they would completely disagree. Such issues remain unsolved at current stage of planning process; and they would bring new conflicts if the process proceeds.

In the case of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, the overall situation in the planning process is stable. It appears that both interviewed groups do not encounter each other. But the results show a range of possible situations that might occur during following progress of the planning process due to different interpretations and understandings on Natura 2000 as well as different interests. If the current situation keeps proceeding and different participants sit together, there would be increasingly serious misunderstandings among these participants since the knowledge about Natura 2000 and the political context. In this research, the interviewed citizens did not show strong frustration or opposition to Natura 2000, which is different from what has been stated in other researches. The reason may be that their knowledge of Natura 2000 is fairly insufficient, which resulted in their positive attitude toward Natura 2000 since its objective just fulfils the interests of citizens, namely enjoyment of nature. But if more details about this policy (e.g. its influence on the existing decision making) is provided to the citizens, their attitudes would possibly be changed if their interests are threatened with the changing understanding on Natura 2000. And this conflictful situation may be even more serious. Because citizens may complain about the insufficient information from the responsible authority; and their trust to the authority may decrease. This distrust has occurred among local stakeholders as introduced by the official of the Province of Gelderland. If the citizens have been informed adequately and elaborately about Natura 2000, the conflicts may be triggered earlier; but the trust may remain; and planners and decision makers would be able to foresee and anticipate a more serious situation. And another point is that conflict can bring more perspectives to the decision making. This requires decision makers for comprehensive consideration and appropriate actions. In the case of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, according to previous researches and interviews with responsible authorities, Natura 2000 provides a vague meaning and consequences to the designated nature areas; and the interpretation on Natura 2000 is mainly focusing on its legal status. Its items are just forcefully involved in the law and different projects; but its meaning is still not clarified to the stakeholders and citizens. The occurrence of conflict would bring different interpretations of the policy and meanings provided by the locals. Thus an improved communication would help to clarify the policy meaning to both authorities and citizens; and thereby a more cooperative decision making can be achieved.

## 4. Discussions

*In previous chapter, the findings of the case study have been analyzed. In this discussion chapter, these findings will be discussed in a wider context of literatures that was explored in chapter 2 as well as the theoretical framework established in chapter 2. According to the literature review, conflict develops as a process in a cyclized sequence. The findings will be discussed in following themes: overall conflict process, conditions, interaction and legacy.*

As shown in the results of the case study, there were a set of conflict processes occurring in the planning process of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn. Although conflict would be generated when disputants are in the same relationship as described in the theory, according to the case study, the situation in planning practice is much more complicated. The models of Wall & Callister (1995) and Pondy (1976) explains one conflict process within a relationship. In planning practice, there are many conflict processes in parallel. These processes have different progresses; and these processes can coexist in a peaceful situation; and such conflict is not always directly and readily triggered in real planning practice. The difference is resulted from the findings of the research that although in a same relationship or context and each conflict process proceeds as the model described in the theory, different conflict processes might be at different layers, which are not influencing or indirectly influencing each other. In this case there is a less chance for different processes to confront with each other and thereby generate conflict.

The first part of the theoretical framework is the conditions or potential of conflict process. As argued by Pondy (1967), those conditions do not necessarily and directly influence the interaction process; and thereby trigger conflict (Pondy, 1967). But as investigated in the case study, conditions (interests. etc) were directly influencing the interaction process of the conflict development; and thereby influencing the progress of conflict process. For example, most of the interviewed citizens do not have further actions since their interests in the area, namely the enjoyment of nature, were just fulfilled. And many negative issues of the policy (e.g. the consequence of the policy that might lead to frustration was not clarified in the policy) were hidden due to the insufficient participation of the residents.

The core process is an interaction process that works in a perceiving, feeling and behaving sequence (Wall & Callister, 1995). And this core process is where real conflict is generated (Wall & Callister, 1995). As discussed in pervious paragraph, the case study revealed a direct influence of conflict conditions on interaction. This is different from what has been described in the theory. This point is significantly performed in the step of perceiving. Citizens' interests of enjoying nature and insufficient knowledge of Natura 2000 directly resulted in their perception of "Natura 2000 is an effective instrument to organize the nature". Besides the interests, the interpersonal communication and the way that participants were involved also have directly influence on the interaction. The reason why the residents have relatively positive perceptions on Natura 2000 is that their involvement in the planning process was limited; thereby their knowledge of Natura 2000 and other stakeholders is insufficient. From

this point on, it appears that the direction and progress of conflict process can be foreseen. But according the theory, the interaction process, more specifically the behaving step, determines the direction of conflict development (Pondy, 1967). Except the direct influence of conflict conditions, the interaction proceeds as the sequence, which the theory has described. Due to the uncompleted process of the project, the legacy of conflict and resolutions were limited. One more important point is that the conflict condition has controlled the core process; and thereby controlled the legacy.

In general although it is argued in the theory (Wall & Callister, 1995) that the core process triggers the real conflict, in practice the conditions of conflict process and the perception are remarkably functional in controlling the direction of conflict development. Zooming out to the wider context of participatory planning process, it is shown that the conditions including both interests and communication in the early step are fair crucial for determining the direction of conflict development. Because these conditions control the perception of the participants, as in the case that the residents have limited knowledge of Natura 2000 and briefly understood that the policy aims to conserve the nature, which is exactly what they expected. So what if they know more about this policy? Or what if they perceive the risk of the policy to their own stake? The planners or decision maker should consider these variables in the planning process. For example, they should consider if the residents should have limited involvement. If the situation proceeds as the case does, the conflict process would develop peacefully. If the residents and other stakeholders would have more opportunities to participate, different conflict process would be confronted with each other. Therefore the situation may be more complicated.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

*The overall research results will be concluded in section 5.1. Some recommendations are given in section 5.2*

### 5.1 Conclusions

In this conclusion section, the main research question will be answered.

***How can the conflict process be conceptually understood in the context of participatory spatial planning?***

For answering the main research question, two sub research questions have been formulated in the first chapter. The answer to the main research question will be concluded based on the answers to the sub research questions as well as the discussion in previous section.

After an extensive literature study, it was found that scholars define conflict in two main streams. The first one considers conflict as a single phenomenon, in which different competitive intensions are involved; the second one considers conflict as a dynamic process, in which a range of phenomena are involved. And such a process develops in a sequence. In this sequence, participants' interests, perceptions, emotions and behaviours are logically connected. In this research the second definition is chosen. The most remarkable advantage of considering conflict process is that conflict in this case can be divided into different components. It is easier to analyze the progress of the conflict from potential to results. In addition the process of conflict also, in a different perspective reflects the progress of planning process. Concerning planning practice, conflict is an indispensable component of the decision making process. In the process the conflict between different actors are triggered, understood and resolved.

In this research, two models of conflict as a process were introduced. One is a social process of the conflict, which described a cyclized conflict development process with a sequence of causes, core process and effects. Another model is a conflict episode suggested by Pondy (1967). This conflict process describes a five stages conflict model. In general, conflict develops in a systematic and cyclized process. This process operates between different participants or disputants involved in a same relationship or context as mentioned in the literature study. This process starts from condition or latency of conflict, which contains both personal issues like interests or goals and interpersonal issues like involvement of these participants. However these conditions do not necessarily generate direct conflict. But as revealed in the case study in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, the conflict conditions have direct influence on the following steps, especially the perception of participants. The key step of this process is an interaction process. This interaction consists of three factors, namely the perception on conflict, emotional feeling in a conflictful situation and the behaviours or actions of reacting the conflict. These three factors operate in a smooth sequence. Lastly

new conditions for a new conflict process will be created due to the effect of the conflict conditions that did not form conflict between participants before interaction process and the effects of the interaction process. If the conflict process ends up with a cooperative understanding between disputants, then the process will be stopped; while if there are issues remain unsolved, then the conflict will keep proceeding to a new process.

However, there are many conflict processes, where are the same as described in pervious paragraph, coexisting in planning practice. According to the results of case study in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, none the conflict process of each actor has reached a cooperative agreement with each other; and the progresses of conflict development varies between different participants. The processes do not necessarily confront with each other; but the conflict developments among citizen group appear to be more 'peaceful' and proceed until the head of 'behaviour'. But it does not indicate a cooperative situation of the process. Potential conflictful issues (e.g. disagreement on further influence from Natura 2000 on citizens' own places) still remain unsolved as legacy. Nevertheless the relationship between the responsible authorities and the citizens and Natura 2000 are seemingly smooth and peaceful. But such peacefulness seems to be temporary. And some factors can transfer the current situation into a worse. For example, when elaborately analysing the interview results, the citizens' knowledge of Natura 2000 are insufficient. Thus they only perceive the positive function of nature conservation; but there are more issues need to be considered just like the discussion between the Province of Gelderland and Rijkswaterstaat. It is risky that when there is a direct conversation between authority and citizens, serious misunderstanding and conflict might occur.

Overall according to the case study, conflict is a more complex concept than it was described in the theory; conflict is actually an important part of participatory spatial planning. It simply exists in the reality since understanding on policy, decision and context can never reach the same level. Thus instead of avoiding it, it is more crucial to accept it; and to explore the chances it might turn from a risk to the decision making as discussed in previous section. And it is an unavoidable part of spatial planning. It brings a great deal of indispensable issues, on which normally less attention was put by planning decision makers. As the research shows, conflict or cooperation is not a definite term. In the case study, there is actually a more serious conflictful situation behind the peaceful situation or they can be transferred with each other. It was hidden since the understandings and perceptions on Natura 2000 policy of different actors are different are at various levels. This results in a disconnection between different conflict processes. In other words there is no direct confrontation between these participants since they are talking about different stories about Natura 2000. And this point (conditions of conflict) is always unseen or neglected in planning process, but might have remarkable consequence in the later steps of decision making. Also conflict extends the range of considerations in the planning process. For example, one of the citizens claimed a self-autonomy in the nature area and argued that people can also be involved in management of the site. Decision makers might take into account this argument instead of

forcefully implement the legislation as they did. This shown conflict is helpful to achieve cooperation between decision maker and residents.

## ***5.2 Recommendations***

### Recommendations for Planning Practice

1. According to the case study, an imbalance of understanding on Natura 2000 policy and planning process partially resulted in different perceptions on the policy; and thereby different progress of conflict process. In spite of a temporary 'quiet' situation, more serious conflict might be generated if participants have further communication with each other and more knowledge about (negative side of ) the policy and context. It is important to provide comprehensive knowledge about relevant policy to local stakeholders and residents; and to create a relatively communicative and open manner for demonstrating their own understandings and meanings of the policy. The reason for doing this is not only that the trust of public and stakeholders to the planners and decision makers would be increased; but also and more valuable to decrease the gap between understandings of different participants; in other words to trigger the conflict between disputants that can help decision maker to forecast the risky situation and make proper solutions for the potential risks and confrontations in the planning process.

2. Based on the first recommendation, I would suggest that involving people in the early phase of a planning process is important. As described in the discussion and conclusion section, the conditions of conflict have direct influence on the core process of conflict and control over the direction of the conflict development.

3. For the responsible authorities, instead of enforcing legal instruments to implement relevant policy, it is wiser to understand the specific meaning of the policy to the target area. For doing this, it is indispensable to understand the conflict and its developments among different participants; therefore to explore specific interpretations of the participants on the policy. By combining different opinions about the policy before starting a decision making process, a relatively more cooperative and consensual meaning of the policy would be created in order to reduce the misunderstandings and complains in the decision making.

### Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the analysis of the results and personal experience in this research, the findings of research appear to be insufficient; there a great space to make the research on this topic more comprehensive. Therefore same recommendations for further investigations are provided as follows: (1) According to the literature study on theory of conflict, there are more issues (e.g. desires for autonomy as latent conflict) regarding to the conflict process than those focused in this research. Thus a more comprehensive theoretical framework including more analytical points can be established. Thus the results can be more elaborated and specific; (2) in this research, the interviews with responsible authorities and local



residents have been conducted. Interviews with local stakeholders are also interesting and valuable to arrange in order to understand the conflict of stakeholder group. This will definitely enrich the research results of this thesis; (3) since the designation process is still proceeding, it is valuable to follow and investigate further developments of different conflict processes and different possibilities of planning process that those conflict processes will result in. If possible, investigation can be conducted in a second round or third round of conflict process; and then comparing different cycles of conflict process to find out what have been changed and what resulted in the changes. Such an analysis reflects the progress of decision making in a creative perspective; and according to the changes in the process, planners or decision makers can understand what became better or worse; and thereby improving more details of the planning process.

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Figure 5: <http://www.ontherhine.com/pics/rhine-parts-600px.jpg>

Figure7:[http://www.provincie-utrecht.nl/publish/library/281/uiterwaarden\\_neder-rijn.jpg](http://www.provincie-utrecht.nl/publish/library/281/uiterwaarden_neder-rijn.jpg)

## 7. Appendix

### Abbreviations

SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPAs	Special Protection Areas
ECNC	European Commission of Nature Conservation
BD	Bird Directive
HD	Habitat Directive
EU	European Union
EHS	Ecological Main Structure

### Interviewees

Name	Represented Organization
1. Mr. Jan Willem van der Vegte	Province of Gelderland
2. Ms. Danielle Verhoeven	Rijkswaterstaat

### Interview Questions (Responsible Authorities)

1. What is the objective of Natura 2000?
2. What is your goal in the Natura 2000 area?
3. When did the planning process start?
4. How was the process organized? And progress?
5. What measures have been taken for implementing Natura 2000?
6. Who were involved in the planning process? And how?
7. What have you learnt from your participants?
8. What are the tensions in the process?
9. How did you perceive the tensions?
10. What is your attitude toward Natura 2000 and the tensions?
11. How did you deal with the tensions?

**Interview Questions (Residents)**

1. Are you from local?
2. What do you do in the area?
3. Why do you come to the area?
4. What do like about the area? /what do you think is the best situation for this area?
5. Do you know Natura 2000?
6. If yes, how did you know it?
7. Have you ever involved in any conversation with responsible authorities or stakeholders concerning implementation of Natura 2000?
8. Have you perceived any tensions about the planning process?
9. What is your attitude toward Natura 2000 or the tension?
10. What action will you take if your interests are disturbed?

## Results of Interviews in Uiterwaarden Neder Rijn

	Conditions		Interaction			Effects (Conditions)	
	Personal	Interpersonal	Perception on Conflicts	Emotional feelings on Conflicts	Behaviours on Conflicts	Legacy	Solution
Provincial Authority of Gelderland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Nature conservation</li> <li>-National Ecological Main Structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Responsible Authority</li> <li>-Stakeholder</li> <li>-Open manner to the public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-at policy level Dutch national policy and Natura 2000 are similar</li> <li>-at practical level, Natura 2000 influences the national policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Natura 2000 complicated the existing planning process (e.g. different issued species)</li> <li>-More strict than the national nature policy</li> <li>-Time pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Asking for more executive power and time from the State Council for the formulation of management plan</li> <li>-Asking for more detailed information from Ministry of EL&amp;I</li> <li>-Holding consultation meeting to the public and responding to the questions and critiques</li> <li>-Trying to find a balanced and sustainable solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Time pressure on formulating management plan</li> <li>-Current work on EHS is disturbed</li> </ul>	
Rijkswaterstaat  Land Use Planning Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Water management and related projects</li> <li>-Water Safety</li> <li>-‘Room for the rivers’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Stakeholder</li> <li>-Provide information about river system</li> <li>-Discussion with both groups in higher and lower levels</li> <li>-Wageningen University</li> <li>-Less responsible in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Did not perceive conflicts that might occur in the first place when Natura 2000 policy was just introduced</li> <li>-less attention in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Feeling risky to Natura 2000</li> <li>-Natura 2000 does not consider climate change</li> <li>-Lots of responsible projects are facing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Contact and cooperate with the province and ministry in high level</li> <li>-lower existing standards</li> <li>-Communication with local stakeholders and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-How to find a balance between Natura 2000 and ‘Room for River’?</li> </ul>	



		case of Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn	first place  -conflict between nature conservation and water management	delay  -still positive to cooperate	residents  -Compensation  -Using legal instruments in case of inoperative target		
Citizen 1	-Enjoyment of nature and water	-Not be involved in any meeting for discussion	-Have not perceived personal conflict with Natura 2000  -See Natura 2000 as a risk to the local farmers: 1. Cows are not free to go inside; 2. Ambiguity of selling the land to the government as nature conservation area	-Positive to Natura 2000  -Natura 2000 brings species to the area, even some of the species that had been disappeared in the Netherlands	-No further action on Natura 2000	-Would not agree to give own place for nature or water if it happens since the area along the floodplain is uniquely perfect place to live in	
Citizen 2	-Enjoyment of nature  -Perfect surrounding environment for his own studio	-Has been involved in the consultation on nature conservation project in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn, but not concerning Natura 2000	-No perception on conflict with Natura 2000	-Natura 2000 is good instrument for nature conservation  -Decision making of Natura 2000 project should be negotiable	-No further action on Natura 2000	-Would not agree to move even if being compensated	
Citizen 3	-Enjoyment of nature	-Not be involved in decision making  -Has been informed by RWS about the project in his place	-No perception on conflict with Natura 2000 since no project has been started due to the financial issues	-Natura 2000 is a good instrument to build up an ecological corridor for species  -Nature and agriculture can be	-No further action on Natura 2000	-Would not accept if any influence from Natura 2000 takes place  -Cultural landscape is as important as natural	

				integrated -Farmers should be respected		landscape -Actions for water safety are acceptable	
Citizen 4	-Enjoyment of nature	-Not be involved in Natura 2000	-No specific perceptions on conflict with Natura 2000 since he doesn't know enough about this policy	-Good instrument -Less communication	-No further action to Natura 2000	-No further change or influence on current situation is acceptable  -Recreation and culture are also important issues  -The land owner never communicate with the citizens	
Citizen 5	-Enjoyment of nature	-Only informed about the policy  -“the government listens to people, but does not follow people's wishes in practice”	-No specific perception on conflict with Natura 2000 due to insufficient knowledge of Natura 2000	-Effective instrument to organize the nature	-No further actions to Natura 2000	-Any disturbance of Natura 2000 on her own place is not acceptable, even although a serious situation might occur  -The government should find other solutions on either nature conservation or water management	
Citizen 6	-Enjoyment of Nature	-Not involved in any consultation concerning Natura 2000 on Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn	-NO specific perception on conflict with Natura 2000	-No specific feeling on Natura 2000	-No further actions to Natura 2000		
Citizen 7	-Enjoyment of Nature and recreational activities	-Not formally be involved	-No specific perception on conflict	-No specific feeling on	-Discuss with the	-People on site need respect from the	

	on site	in any consultation	with Natura 2000	Natura 2000	government	government -Citizens can also well organize the area	
<b>Citizen in general</b>	-Enjoying nature and surrounding environment	-None of the citizen interviews has deliberative interaction with governmental organizations concerning Natura 2000	-The current situation in Uiterwaarden Neder-Rijn appears t to be 'peaceful'	-Every interviewee showed positive attitude toward Natura 2000 and agreed that Natura 2000 is effective	-Most citizens do not have actions of protesting against Natura 2000	-NIMBY (the residents felt positive to Natura 2000 unless their properties are disturbed by expansion of the project)	

