

Policy makers are from Saturn,... Citizens are from Uranus...

Involving citizens in environmental governance in the Drentsche Aa area

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Wettelijke Onderzoekstaken Natuur & Milieu



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For quality of life

Policy makers are from Saturn, Citizens are from Uranus.....

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Abstract

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This study investigated, theoretically as well as empirically, the relationship between public support for nature conservation policy – in the sense of citizen involvement – and governance in Dutch nature policy practices. It involved an in-depth case study of the relation between citizen involvement and governance in nature conservation policy in the Drentsche Aa area. We analysed the functioning of two multi-actor platforms as well as the link between the citizens' representatives on these regional platforms and their local-level constituencies. The analysis showed that the governance initiatives that aimed at the inclusion of different actors led to the enactment of various, invited as well as uninvited, forms of citizenship, such as 'passive citizenship', 'stakeholder citizenship', 'assimilated citizenship', 'antagonistic citizenship' and 'creative citizenship'.

Key words: multi-stakeholder platforms, multi-actor governance, governance, citizens, citizenship, participation, interactive policy making, Drentsche Aa, Drentse Aa

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Dit onderzoek richt zich zowel conceptueel als empirisch op de relatie tussen draagvlak voor natuur, in de zin van betrokkenheid van burgers, en governance in het Nederlandse natuurbeleid. Er is een diepgaande case study uitgevoerd in het gebied van de Drentsche Aa. Gekeken is naar het functioneren van twee multi-actor platforms en naar de samenhang tussen de vertegenwoordigers op deze platforms en hun achterban op lokaal niveau. Hieruit bleek dat governance initiatieven die zich richten op het betrekken van verschillende actoren leiden tot verschillende intentionele en niet-intentionele vormen van burgers en burgerschap, zoals 'passieve burgers', 'vertegenwoordigers', 'geassimileerde burgers', 'antagonistische burgers' en 'creatieve burgers'.

Trefwoorden: multi-stakeholder platforms, multi-actor governance, governance, burgers, burgerschap, participatie, betrokkenheid, interactieve beleidsvorming, Drentsche Aa, Drentse Aa

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Preface

Dutch nature conservation policy aims to increase public support for, and involve citizens in, the protection and management of natural areas. This ambition fits in with what is regarded in the academic literature as trends in governance. The question is, however, what happens when these ambitions are put into practice?

This question has guided the research that is documented in this report. In this report we used the Drentsche Aa area in the Netherlands as a case study because this area was the subject of some formal attempts to involve citizens in nature conservation policy. We were interested to find out what forms of citizen involvement were achieved as a result of these multi-stakeholder and participatory initiatives.

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Severine van Bommel, Esther Turnhout, Noelle Aarts and Froukje Boonstra

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Contents

Preface	5
Summary	9
Samenvatting	11
1 Introduction	13
1.1 Problem statement	13
1.2 Theoretical framework	14
1.2.1 Governance	14
1.2.2 Public support and citizen involvement	16
1.2.3 Construction of 'the citizen'	17
1.3 Approach	19
1.3.1 Operationalisation of the main concepts	19
1.3.2 Research questions	20
1.3.3 Interpretative approach	20
1.3.4 Case study design	20
1.3.5 Data collection	21
1.3.6 Analysis	22
1.3.7 Outline of the report	23
2 Context – a historical overview of the Drentsche Aa case	25
2.1 Description of the area	25
2.2 Policy history	27
2.2.1 A top-down National Park?	27
2.2.2 ROM project and WCL project	27
2.2.3 A top-down National Park? No!	28
3 Representatives' involvement in the BIO Plan for the Drentsche Aa area	31
3.1 The Regional Advisory Committee	31
3.2 Developing the advice	32
3.3 The final advice	32
3.4 The Preparatory Committee	37
3.5 Developing the BIO Plan	38
3.6 The BIO Plan	39
3.7 Conclusion	43
4 Involvement of constituencies in the Drentsche Aa area	45
4.1 Formulation of the BIO Plan	45
4.1.1 Information meetings	45
4.1.2 Leaving responsibility to others	46
4.1.3 Lack of identification with the National Landscape	46
4.1.4 Disillusioned by participation	48
4.1.5 Active non-participation	50

4.1.6	Actively opposing nature policy plans	50
4.2	Implementation of the BIO Plan	51
4.2.1	Invited and uninvited involvement	51
4.2.2	Local entrepreneurship	51
4.2.3	The Village Landscape Plans	52
4.2.4	The Amerdiep project	53
4.3	Conclusion	55
5	The construction of citizenship in the Drentsche Aa area	57
5.1	The passive citizen	57
5.1.1	The voting citizen	57
5.1.2	The indifferent citizen	57
5.2	The stakeholder citizen	58
5.3	The assimilated citizen	58
5.4	The antagonistic citizen	59
5.5	The disillusioned citizen	59
5.6	The entrenched citizen	59
5.7	The creative citizen	60
6	Discussion and Conclusions	61
6.1	Main findings and conclusions: citizen involvement in environmental governance	61
6.2	General discussion: understanding governance and citizen involvement	63
	Literature cited	67

Summary

This study investigated, theoretically as well as empirically, the relationship between public support for nature conservation policy – in the sense of citizen involvement – and governance in Dutch nature policy practices. The central research question was: how can we understand governance initiatives aimed at the involvement of multiple actors in policy processes and how do these initiatives work out in practice, in terms of achieving actual involvement?

We answered the research question by means of an in-depth case study of the relation between citizen involvement and governance in Dutch nature conservation policy in the Drentsche Aa area. This area is characterised by great pluriformity in terms of functions and landscapes. This is why a large variety of actors have always had a stake in nature and landscape policy in this area. And since citizen involvement over the last 15 years is considered to have been successful, the Drentsche Aa area represents a case in which the aim to build governance is taking shape, at least formally. We organised 60 interviews with actors involved in governance processes in the Drentsche Aa area. In addition to this, a dozen transcripts of multi-actor meetings, as well as newspaper clippings from two regional newspapers and correspondence, e-mails and minutes of meetings were collected by means of archival research. Last but not least, we carried out a literature study on the Drentsche Aa area, on governance and on citizen involvement.

This report shows that multi-actor governance in the Drentsche Aa area is struggling with tensions between regional multi-actor initiatives and local initiatives. On the one hand, regional multi-actor initiatives have been formulated by regional actors in processes that took existing policies as their starting point. On the other hand, local actors had their own views and engaged in their own practices. The interpretative framework of the local actors did not always match that of the regional multi-actor platform. These tensions resulted to a large extent from the functioning of the multi-actor platform itself. We show that what the multi-actor platform achieved in practice amounted to little more than reproducing the formal perspective. Therefore, the fact that certain stakeholders were represented on this platform did not imply that the perceptions of those they were supposed to represent would indeed be considered. As a consequence, the interpretative frameworks and perceptions of constituencies differed from those of their 'representatives' on the platform. Hence, it is not surprising that when villagers were approached with invitations to become involved in policy processes, they responded with apathy, resistance and/or manipulation of the existing policy frameworks.

The governance ambition of Dutch nature conservation policy, which is to involve multiple actors in policy processes, has led to different forms of involvement. They led both to the inclusion of specific groups of villagers in formal, invitation-based participatory practices and to the exclusion of other groups of villagers from these practices. While citizenship became formally associated with those who were able to participate, by implication, a non-participating group of citizens also emerged. In this report we show that these villagers also enacted their citizenship, though not by responding to invitations to become involved and participating in formal arrangements, but in various other and often creative ways. Therefore, the governance initiatives that aimed at the inclusion of various actors led to the enactment of various, invited as well as uninvited, forms of citizenship such as 'passive citizenship', 'stakeholder citizenship', 'assimilated citizenship', 'antagonistic citizenship' and 'creative citizenship'.

These observations are very important in relation to current trends in governance. In general, the governance literature takes a view of citizenship that emphasises the capacity of citizens to participate and engage in decisions that affect their lives. The challenge is to create the conditions that allow new forms of citizenship, in which citizens are invited to become involved in nature and landscape policy in more active ways, as autonomous creators and owners of knowledge included in particular practices. What this report makes clear is that governance intentions to involve multiple actors in policy processes result in many different, invited as well as uninvited, involvement practices. Citizenship is enacted not only as intentional and invitation-based participation, but also in informal, unanticipated and uninvited ways. It is crucial to address and recognise this broad range of practices as important, legitimate and meaningful manifestations of involvement and citizenship.

Samenvatting

Dit onderzoek richt zich, zowel conceptueel als empirisch, op de relatie tussen draagvlak voor natuurbeleid, in de zin van betrokkenheid van burgers, en governance in het Nederlandse natuurbeleid. De hoofdonderzoeksvraag is: "Hoe kunnen we governance-initiatieven begrijpen die tot doel hebben om meerdere actoren in het beleidsproces te betrekken en hoe werken deze initiatieven uit in de praktijk in termen van daadwerkelijke betrokkenheid?"

We hebben de onderzoeksvraag beantwoord door een diepgaande case study uit te voeren over betrokkenheid van burgers en governance in het Nederlands natuurbeleid in het Drentsche Aa-gebied. Het Drentsche Aa-gebied wordt gekarakteriseerd door een grote pluriformiteit in functies en landschappen. Bovendien wordt de betrokkenheid van burgers over de laatste 15 jaar als succesvol gezien. Het Drentsche Aa-gebied vormt een case waarin het doel om tot governance te komen in ieder geval formeel vorm krijgt. In het Drentsche Aa-gebied zijn 60 interviews met actoren gehouden. Het onderzoek is verder gebaseerd op een dozijn transcripten van multi-actor bijeenkomsten, krantenknipsels van twee regionale kranten, correspondentie, e-mails en notulen van vergaderingen. De laatste zijn verzameld door middel van archiefonderzoek. Tot slot is er ook een literatuurstudie uitgevoerd over governance en betrokkenheid van burgers in het Drentsche Aa-gebied.

Dit rapport laat zien dat multi-actor governance in het Drentsche Aa-gebied worstelt met spanningen tussen regionale multi-actor initiatieven en lokale initiatieven. Aan de ene kant worden regionale multi-actor initiatieven geformuleerd door actoren in een proces dat bestaand beleid als uitgangspunt nam. Aan de andere kant hadden lokale actoren hun eigen kijk op de zaken. Deze kijk van de lokale actoren kwam niet altijd overeen met de kijk van het regionale multi-actor platform. Deze spanningen waren in veel gevallen het resultaat van het multi-actor platform zelf. We zullen laten zien dat het multi-actor platform in de praktijk vooral het formele perspectief reproduceerde. Daarom kon representatie in dit platform niet garanderen dat de visies van de achterban ook meegenomen zouden worden. Hierdoor verschilden de visies van de vertegenwoordigers en hun achterban nogal eens. Het is niet verwonderlijk dat veel burgers met apathie, weerstand of manipulatie van het bestaande beleidskader reageerden toen ze uitgenodigd werden tot betrokkenheid.

De governance-ambities van Nederlands natuurbeleid om meerdere actoren te betrekken in het beleidsproces heeft tot verschillende praktijken van betrokkenheid geleid. Het heeft geleid tot zowel betrokkenheid van bepaalde specifieke groepen burgers in formele op uitnodiging gebaseerde participatieve praktijken als tot de uitsluiting van andere groepen van burgers tot deze praktijken. Terwijl formeel burgerschap de associatie kreeg met de burgers voor wie participatie mogelijk was, impliceert dit ook dat er een groep burgers ontstond die niet participeerde. In dit rapport laten we zien hoe burgers vorm geven aan hun burgerschap. Dit kan vele vormen nemen. Niet alleen door te reageren op formele uitnodigingen gaven burgers vorm aan burgerschap, maar ook door op creatieve wijze vorm te geven aan formele beleidskaders. De governance-initiatieven die gericht waren op het betrekken van verschillende actoren resulteerde in verschillende opzettelijke en onopzettelijke vormen van burgerschap zoals 'de passieve burger', 'de vertegenwoordiger', 'de geassimileerde burger', 'de antagonistische burger' en/of de 'creatieve burger'.

Deze conclusies zijn erg belangrijk in relatie tot de huidige trends in governance. Als het gaat om burgerschap, benadrukt governance-literatuur in het algemeen de capaciteit van burgers

om deel te nemen en te participeren in besluiten die invloed hebben op hun leven. De uitdaging is om voorwaarden te creëren die ruimte geven aan nieuwe vormen van burgerschap waarin burgers uitgenodigd worden om op een actievere manier betrokken te raken bij natuur in landschapsbeleid. Burgers kunnen hun betrokkenheid dan uiten als autonome dragers van kennis die besloten ligt in specifieke praktijken.

In het kort maakt dit rapport duidelijk dat de governance-intentie om meerdere actoren te betrekken bij het beleidsproces zal resulteren in vele verschillende, opzettelijke en onopzettelijke vormen van betrokkenheid. Er wordt uiting gegeven aan burgerschap, niet alleen door middel van opzettelijke op uitnodiging gebaseerde vormen van participatie, maar ook door middel van informele, onopzettelijke en onuitgenodigde manieren. Het is cruciaal om deze diversiteit aan praktijken te onderkennen en te herkennen als belangrijke, legitieme en betekenisvolle manifestaties van betrokkenheid en burgerschap.

1 Introduction

This chapter first presents the problem statement of the research, resulting in a central research aim (1.1). It then presents the theoretical framework that was used in the research (1.2), which addresses the topics of governance, public support, citizen involvement and citizenship. The chapter concludes with a methodological section (1.3) including the operationalisation of concepts, research questions, approach and methods and an outline of the report (1.4).

1.1 Problem statement

The concept of governance is increasingly used, in policy practice as well as in the policy science literature, to make sense of a number of important societal trends. One of these trends relates to a changing role of the state, which is thought to shift from top-down regulation to bottom-up facilitation of policy processes which involve not only state actors but also non-state actors – such as NGOs, private parties and citizens. In policy practice, the concept of governance is not only used to refer to a societal trend but is also used as a normative standard to judge the quality of a policy practice. The idea is that the actual steering capacity of the state is limited and therefore non-state actors should be given more influence on the policy to increase the legitimacy of the policy processes and outcomes, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation.

In Dutch nature and landscape policy, increased attention is being paid to governance in an attempt to increase the quality of policy practices. The National Structure Plan for Green Areas¹ (LNV & VROM, 1995) addressed the notion of governance, by formulating ‘Strategic Green Projects’², which emphasised interactive and participatory processes. In addition, the policy document called Dynamics and Innovation³ (LNV, 1995) emphasised the importance of involving multiple actors in nature policy. The so-called Management Program⁴ (LNV, 1997) fits in well with this approach because it tries to involve private landowners in countryside stewardship, in addition to the traditional conservationists. The policy document entitled Nature for People, People for Nature (LNV, 2000) explicitly expressed the ambition that people should be able to access and use natural areas and that actors should take responsibility for the management, protection and development of natural habitats. To this end, the document encourages cooperation between government and societal actors (LNV, 2000). In addition to this, it expresses the explicit desire to take people’s opinions into account when designing and managing natural habitats:

“Nature should meet de demands of society [...] The term [nature] as we use it embraces nature from the wildlife on people’s doorstep to the Wadden Sea. This is how most people perceive nature” (LNV, 2000, pp. 1).

Meeting the demands of society should achieve greater use of natural areas and hence greater public support for nature. This is because:

¹ Structuurschema Groene Ruimte

² Strategisch Groen Projecten

³ Nota Dynamiek en Vernieuwing

⁴ Programma Beheer

'As a result of contact with nature, people will develop a bond with nature, a necessary precondition for potential social support for nature and nature policy' (Elands, 2004; cited in WOT Natuur en Milieu, 2005).

Although attempts at increased governance in nature policy have definitely been made, it remains unknown how and to what extent governance will manifest itself in the unpredictable policy practice, in which different dilemmas and opposite forces are at play.

We also note that the perceived advantages of governance (i.e. whether it really does lead to increased public support for nature policy) have hardly been addressed in research. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP) has also noted this:

'hardly any research has addressed the relation between the "nature for people" policy goals [...] and public support' (WOT Natuur en Milieu, 2005).

Here lies an important task for social science research. The aim of this project was therefore:

To investigate, both theoretically and empirically, the way in which attempts at achieving governance and creating public support for nature and landscape policy manifest themselves in specific practices of citizen involvement.

This should allow us to understand not only the nature of the attempts to achieve governance and citizen involvement, but also the results of these attempts in terms of specific practices. Before presenting our empirical investigation, we first introduce the analytical framework and the methodology.

1.2 Theoretical framework

1.2.1 Governance

The concept of governance has received attention as a research object from many different disciplines (Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2001). Even though the concept is interpreted in many different ways within these disciplines, the various interpretations also have certain characteristics in common. First of all, there is an emphasis on a shift in policy processes, from 'government' (based on state institutions) to 'governance' (based on a network of actors including non-state actors). Secondly, whereas 'government' focuses on the autonomy of the central expert-guided government (Bruijn *et al.*, 1993; Teisman, 1995), 'governance' focuses on the interaction between the various public and private actors in a mix of formal and informal policy practices. In a governance setting, policy making and politics are often taking place in an 'institutional void', in which there are no generally accepted rules and norms according to which policy making and politics are to be conducted (Hajer *et al.*, 2004).

Governance can refer to a changing role of the state: from top-down regulation to bottom-up facilitation of horizontal cooperation within administrative levels involving non-state actors such as NGOs, private parties and citizens (Kooiman 1993; Pierre 2000, Pierre & Peters 2000). This trend is also referred to as multi-actor governance (Van der Zouwen & Van Tatenhove 2002; Bogaert 2004). Other trends to which the concept of governance is being applied are decentralisation and internationalisation. These trends, which are less important for the present study, are also called multi-level governance (Hooghe & Marks 2001). In this study we focused on multi-actor governance processes, which we studied from an actor-oriented analytical perspective. Multi-actor governance emphasises the informal, decentralised and

horizontal relations and the mutual dependence of public and private actors in the formulation and implementation of policy (Van Tatenhove & Leroy, 1995; Kickert *et al.*, 1997; Rhodes, 2000). It implies that political authority is shared among the different actors involved in the policy process. Therefore, multi-actor governance can be characterised as the sharing of decision-making responsibilities among participating actors in a non-hierarchical institutional design and in a non-majoritarian negotiation system. The multiple actors involved in policy processes manage different responsibilities and political engagements and pursue different, often conflicting interests. From a policy perspective, it is important to involve these actors in the policy arena. New challenges emerge in terms of mobilisation of local actors, exploring spaces of negotiation and agenda setting for policy formulation and implementation (see Treib *et al.*, 2005).

Theoretically, the idea of governance is not new. In the 1970s, Scharpf (1978) argued that governments would lose their central and steering role. He predicted that governments would not be able to function without the cooperation of countless organisations and institutions. As a result, policy processes would have a 'network-like' structure (Scharpf, 1978). However, it took a while for these ideas to impact on policy. It is only recently that policy makers have become willing to organise the policy process as such and experiment with new policy practices. As a result, the number of multi-actor platforms as well as the influence of these platforms has increased over the past decade (Mayntz, 1999; Kohler-Koch & Eising, 1999; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Rhodes, 2000).

In the literature, the new multi-actor governance context is often assumed to be 'better' than and 'preferable' to the old government context. In policy practices in particular, the concept of governance is not only used to conceptualise a societal trend but also as a normative standard to judge the quality of policy practice. A good example of this is the publication of the European Union's 'white paper' on governance (European Union, 2001). The notion of governance is based on an increased perception of the limited steering capacity of the state (Pierre & Peters, 2000). Conceived largely in response to a legitimisation crisis, the new assumption appears to be that greater public participation can enhance the efficiency of the policy process by reducing conflict: open discussion will lead public groups to greater confidence in the quality and direction of decision-making (Verbeek & Leroy, 2006). In addition to this, it is thought to enhance equity by means of empowerment and democratisation (Aarts, 1998; Castro & Nielson, 2003). Public participation and engagement are emphasised as both inevitable and desirable in the framing and assessment of issues, validation of knowledge and weighing of evidence on which democratically accountable decisions are based.

This is not to suggest that state institutions and international treaties have suddenly vanished or are rendered meaningless. Governance functions side by side or perhaps within the limits set by other policy coordination mechanisms, such as the state and the market (Bruijn *et al.*, 1993; Teisman, 1995). The emergence of governance entails a redefinition of the role of the government – into a more facilitating role – rather than a complete withdrawal of the state (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003: 5). In their analysis of British governance, Richards and Smith (2002) argue that it 'is not what the state does that is different, but how it does it'. One of their main findings is that while policy goals have remained the same, the 'way they, that is, policy instruments are used and the use of different forms of control have changed the way the state operates'. The analyses by Boonstra (2004) and Van der Zouwen (2006) also suggest that government and governance (at least as ideal types) are actually much more intertwined than is implied by some governance theorists. The extent of blurring between the two categories may be quite substantial. Pierre and Peters (1998) argue that 'government organisations remain a part of the networks in these emerging models of governance, but they are conceptualised as dependent on the other actors to the same extent that those actors are

dependent on government. This leads to a blending of public-sector and private-sector resources.... An increasing number of hybrid organisational formats appear to have materialised as components of the governance framework.' This implies that there has been no uniform shift from government to governance. It also implies that governance and government are not fixed entities and the actual manifestations of governance practices (what is actually happening) cannot be taken for granted and are not unambiguous. Following Irwin (2006), we believe that some very 'old' assumptions of technocratic government may still reside at the heart of the 'new' multi-actor governance. While noting the emergence of a new interest in involving non-state actors in science and policy making, we feel it is important to stress the apparent tensions, shifts in emphasis and partial contradictions within multi-actor governance practices. Taking these points together, we expect to see a struggle over the legitimacy of public views taking place within exercises in multi-actor governance.

The actual manifestation of governance in policy practices with regard to nature conservation (what is actually happening) can thus not be taken for granted and is not unambiguous. This suggests that it is equally unclear whether the ambitious expectations regarding public support are being met.

1.2.2 Public support and citizen involvement

Increasing public support is an important aim of Dutch nature conservation policy (LNV, 2000). Although attention is being paid to several aspects of public support (Veeneklaas *et al.*, 1997) in the first Nature Outlook report by the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (MNP), public support is often narrowly defined as acceptance (Buijs & Volker, 1997). In the first Nature Outlook report, Buijs & Volker take the fundamental view on the relationship between people and nature as a basic indicator of public support. They emphasise that this relationship can provide an overview of all different levels of acceptance among the Dutch population. The second Nature Outlook report by the MNP (MNP, 2000) elaborates on the first by using people's opinions with regard to the importance of nature as basic indicators of public support. This second Nature Outlook report also makes a distinction between potential public support and actual public support. Potential public support is taken to be the outcome of people's opinions with regard to the importance of nature, whereas actual public support is taken to be the outcome of people's attitude and behaviour in terms of current nature conservation policy. All in all, the first Nature Outlook report is characterised by its focus on the fundamental view on the relationship between people and nature as a basic indicator of public support, whereas the second Outlook report is characterised by its focus on people's opinions and views with regard to the importance and availability of nature.

This approach to research into the way public support can be achieved is problematic for various reasons. Our point of departure is the acknowledgement that acceptance of policy, adopted on the basis of democratic decision making ('The government has decided') does not guarantee public support. One of the reasons for this is the fact that current political structures are based on a form of democracy in which interest groups represent the interests of their constituencies. This representation is problematic in most cases and far from unambiguous. Another reason is that most policies are formulated by policy makers – representing the whole of society – whereas the implementation of a policy is influenced by the reactions of the actors that are affected by them. These actors often have a completely different view on the problem that the policy aims to solve (Aarts, 1998). In short, public support is a concept that is too passive. Furthermore, aiming at public support, in the sense of acceptance, is no longer in accordance with the ambitions of Dutch nature conservation policy and the MNP, which have become more interested in people's actual practices (what people *do*) rather than their opinions and views (what people *think*). This shift in interest at the

MNP is reflected in its third Nature Outlook report (De Bakker *et al.*, 2007), which focuses much more on peoples' practices in relation to public support than the first two reports. De Bakker *et al.* (2007) explicitly distinguish 'activities that support nature' as a separate indicator in their research, because they feel that the relationship between peoples' opinions and views and peoples' practices is less straightforward than had been thought.

"Instead of explicit environmental views and values, the emphasis is on practices and the values that are "routinised" in these practices. Values that go without saying become routines. These routines can have a strong influence [on people's practices]." (De Bakker *et al.*, 2007).

Dutch nature conservation policy is also taking an increased interest in people's practices. The title of the 'Nature for People, People for Nature' policy document, for example, neatly illustrates what is being aimed at in Dutch nature conservation policy: if nature is there for people, people will be there for nature (LNV, 2000). Although 'being there for nature' is not the same as public support, it does imply an active attitude towards nature and landscape policy. According to the preface of the 'Nature for People, People for Nature' policy document:

"In this policy document we challenge society to take its share of the responsibility for the strengthening and renewal of our nature policy" (LNV, 2000).

Hence, nature and landscape policy does not aim at public support but aims at concrete practices by which people express their involvement and take responsibility.

The ideal of public support does not fit in well with the current trend of increased governance either. Thinking in terms of social support implies a static way of thinking about policy: first there is a policy, then we need public support. In a governance context, however, policy and public support are produced in interaction. It follows from this that thinking in terms of social support implies a one-way interaction between the government and its citizens (Volker 1998). The government formulates and implements policy and the citizen accepts this policy because it was formulated by elected representatives. This is no longer the case in a governance context, where instead, government and citizens engage in the formulation and implementation of policy together.

Instead of 'public support', we will use the concept of 'citizen involvement'. This concept fits in better with the ambitions of nature conservation policy, because citizen involvement addresses 'what people do' and does not imply consensus or (passive) support. In addition, it fits in better with trends of increased governance because it implies a dynamic and interactive view on policy. Citizen involvement offers room for people's own input. People contribute to nature and landscape policy and nature conservation from their own sense-making. This means that the result cannot be fixed from the beginning, but takes shape during the governance process, partly on the basis of the unique knowledge and experience of the actors involved.

1.2.3 Construction of 'the citizen'

The advantages of citizen participation are often phrased in terms of accountability, legitimacy, support and/or efficiency. There are various reasons to argue for a more critical view. First of all, Wagemans (2002) has paid attention to the fact that not all citizens are included in formal (participatory) policy practices. He states that the formal policy perspective is often re-produced in multi-actor governance practices. Participating stakeholders have an interest in maintaining existing institutions because they have formal positions and responsibilities on which they depend for both income and prestige. Representation does not

automatically imply that the perceptions of those represented are considered in policy making. Wagemans argues that when the perspectives of citizens are different from the formal perspective, the formal perspective always wins. This, however, does not mean that citizens are powerless. Citizens protect their interests in very active ways, making intensive use of objection procedures in formal processes. This is a difficult task and the formal domain is not easily understandable or familiar to all citizens. The extent to which they are able to protect their personal interests depends on the degree to which they know and understand the formal interpretative framework and have the skills to operate and communicate within this perspective.

Secondly, many critics have thrown some doubt on the claims of involving citizens, arguing that, rather than involving citizens at the local level, it simply provides alternative methods for incorporating citizens into the projects of the powerful, who remain essentially unaccountable to those they are supposed to serve. In other words, citizen involvement is simply another means of pursuing traditional top-down agendas, while giving the impression of implementing a more inclusive project of involving citizens and the excluded (Parfitt, 2004). In *Participation: the new tyranny?*, Bill Cooke and Uma Kothari (2001) criticise participatory techniques for their partiality: they produce homogeneous 'local' viewpoints where none previously existed, and they privilege certain voices within the process of participation whilst excluding others (see, inter alia, Guijt & Shah, 1998; Francis, 2001; and Cleaver, 2001). Heiko Henkel and Reoderick Stirrat (2001) argue that citizen involvement incorporates and represents citizens in particular and problematic ways: it gives them a 'voice', but only within highly orchestrated processes where the real choice between – and power over – policy outcomes is strictly limited. For these authors, citizen involvement not only narrows the space for genuine involvement, but also places responsibility for the success (or otherwise) of policy squarely on the shoulders of the beneficiaries (Williams *et al.*, 2003). Citizen involvement has become a mechanism for efficiency of service delivery or for continuing maintenance (Kabeer 1996) that reduces state responsibility (O'Reilly 2002). Overall, these authors argue that participatory processes tend to preserve and reproduce existing, dominant and top down power relations, limit the scope of involvement and restrict citizens in the sense of the identities they can adopt and articulate.

Thirdly, our research intended to be sensitive to the fact that the involvement of citizens can be grounded in different views on democracy, which can lead to different conditions for involving people. These conditions in turn can shape people's practices. There are different views on democracy, including pluralistic ones and deliberative ones. These all have their own implications, for example with regard to the criteria against which participation is judged and with regard to the role that people are expected to play in the participatory process. Pluralistic views aim at involving as many different views as possible, whereas deliberative views aim at improving the quality of the consultation (see Van de Kerkhof & Huitema, 2005).

Fourthly, the practices in which people are allowed to participate are performative and in fact construct 'citizens' as well as 'citizenship'. The problem is that the desire to involve citizens in the policy process often assumes a narrow definition of 'the citizen', as a result of which participative practices only allow a limited spectrum of citizens to be involved. According to Leach, Scoones & Wynne (2005):

'mainstream approaches to "citizen involvement" [...] have been based on implicit models of the citizen grounded in versions of liberal theory. [...] In these, citizens are either expected to engage passively [...] or participate in forums orchestrated by such institutions. This contrasts with a model of the citizen as a more autonomous creator and bearer of knowledge located in particular practices [...] and identities, who engages in more active ways [...]. Such citizens do not act solely as individuals [...] but through emergent [...] social solidarities [...].'

Performance and construction of the citizen is a topic that deserves attention in the present study. Applied to the topic of our research, this leads to the question what kind of citizens the government creates in its ambition to involve people in policy processes, and how these citizens react to practices that allow for active involvement and responsibility.

1.3 Approach

1.3.1 Operationalisation of the main concepts

Our research involves three key concepts, namely governance, citizen involvement and citizenship. We studied these concepts by operationalising them in a way that allowed us investigate them empirically.

In this study we described governance as a policy process in which the role of the state has changed from top-down regulation to bottom-up facilitation of horizontal cooperation within administrative levels, involving non-state actors such as NGOs, private parties and citizens. With regard to the non-state actors, we were specifically interested in the involvement of citizens rather than that of NGOs or private parties. Our study of 'governance' therefore focused on the practices by which citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy, and that follow from the ambition of Dutch nature and landscape policy makers to involve multiple actors in the policy process. This means that if we are interested in the actual manifestation of governance in nature policy practices (what is actually happening) we have to look at citizens and the practices by which they express their involvement.

The present study examined 'citizen involvement' not only by looking at who is involved (inclusion/exclusion) but also by looking at their influence. We feel that just looking at the involvement of various kinds of actors is not enough to understand the governance process, and that it is also important to understand the way in which political authority is shared among the various actors involved in the policy process. With regard to political authority, we focused on the influence that the various actors have on the outcome of the policy process. To study this influence, we looked at the views that actors express, the way the other actors respond to these views (acceptance/rejection) and, in case of acceptance, the extent to which these views can be traced back in subsequent policy documents. By studying the actors involved and their influence, we examined the concrete manifestations of practices by which citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy.

The specific practices expressing citizen involvement result in the construction of citizens and citizenship. The present study examined the various 'types of citizens' that are created during the policy process. First of all, it is important to note that these categories are not fixed categories of people that are manifest in reality but rather ideal types that help to understand the actual involvement of citizens from a dynamic point of view. This dynamic perspective means that citizens are not 'stuck' in one category. They can switch categories over time. In this context, 'ideal type' is not used normatively in the sense of something 'good', 'ideal' or something to be striven for. Rather, we use it theoretically to make sense of empirical reality. Secondly, it is important to note that our typology of citizens does not mean that we take the construction of the citizen to be the result and outcome of the policy process only. We take 'the citizen' to be a co-construction that results from the interaction between citizens and the policy actors.

1.3.2 Research questions

In the context of the operationalisation of the theoretical framework, we can now formulate our research questions. Our central research question is:

How can we understand the practices by which citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy, and that follow from the ambition of Dutch nature and landscape policy to involve multiple actors in the policy process in the Drentsche Aa area in the Netherlands?

We can divide this central research question into four subsidiary research questions:

1. What are the practices by which citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy in the Drentsche Aa area in the Netherlands?
2. What is the influence of the citizens' arguments and what is the subsequent influence of the arguments on the outcome of the policy process?
3. What types of citizen are created in these practices?
4. How can these practices be understood in terms of governance, citizen involvement and citizenship?

1.3.3 Interpretative approach

The context-dependent manifestation of actors' practices requires an in-depth case study into the relation between citizen involvement and governance in Dutch nature policy. If we assume that an actor's practices are embedded in a social, political and cultural context, then it is important to keep the constructed character of 'reality' in mind. This is why we have chosen an interpretative approach in our research. An interpretative approach allows researchers to pay specific attention to the various ways in which people construct their 'truth' and 'reality'. According to Yanow (1996), interpretative modes of policy analysis seek to identify both the specific meanings, intended as well as actual, of specific policy practices and the way these meanings are communicated and variously interpreted. An interpretative approach is therefore rooted in an understanding of the everyday experience of people in specific settings to acquire an understanding of the way people create meaning in everyday life. In this study we wanted to discover what practices mean to people who engage in them. Therefore, we considered the interpretative approach to be a relevant approach to this study.

1.3.4 Case study design

An interpretative approach requires concrete, context-dependent knowledge, and case studies are particularly suitable to produce this knowledge. The advantage of case studies is that they can 'home in' on real-life situations: by placing themselves within the context being studied, researchers can learn to understand the viewpoints and practices of the actors they study. Case studies are multi-perspective analyses, which means that the researchers consider not just the perspective of the actors, but also those of the relevant groups of actors and the interactions between them (Tellis, 1997).

According to Yanow (1996), most interpretative analysts are already 'in the field' in some sense when they begin their research on a policy issue. Through our involvement in the earlier MNP study on 'Involvement of citizens and their views on nature' (Van Bommel *et al.*, 2006), we were already familiar with the situation in the Drentsche Aa area before we started our research there. We were already 'in the field' in some sense. Since the situation that we encountered in the field led to new research questions, we decided to continue our research in this area. In the Drentsche Aa area, citizens are involved in decision making processes on nature issues from a formal perspective as well as by means of concrete practices. In

addition, citizen involvement over the last 15 years is considered to have been successful. Hence, the Drentsche Aa area represents a case in which the aim to build governance is taking shape, at least formally. We used the Drentsche Aa case to produce input for discussions on governance and citizen involvement by critically reflecting on these issues the Drentsche Aa situation.

1.3.5 Data collection

We first examined the practices by which actors expressed their involvement in nature and landscape policy by means of 60 interviews with relevant actors (Table 1). Of these 60 interviews, 30 had already been conducted with citizens within the framework of the earlier MNP study. A further 30 interviews were conducted with other actors (including policy makers, conservationists and representatives of the farmers' union NLTO). All interviews included a discussion of the ways in which interviewees participated and were involved in nature and landscape policy in the Drentsche Aa area. These interviews took 60 to 90 minutes. During the interviews, the respondents were invited to define the relevant practices by which they themselves or others expressed their involvement in nature and landscape policy. If the interviewees referred to practices by other actors, these other actors were also interviewed. Once the actors no longer mentioned any further practices during the interviews, we assumed that we had captured all relevant practices within this case. To encourage the actors to reflect on their practices, we tried to tie in to their experiences as much as possible. To this end, we tried to make the topic of the interviews as concrete as possible by listing all presumably relevant developments in the area in advance, and discussing these developments with the actors during the interviews. Based on their answers, we showed our interest by probing the respondents to give us more information and more detail e.g. What exactly happened during this event? Where and when did this event take place? Who was involved, who was not involved? What did they do and why? What were the consequences of this? Thus, although we had defined a number of topics in advance, we let our interviewees determine the exact course of the interview to maximise our insights into the world in which they lived. This resulted in interviews that were comparable to some extent but were also different.

Our second source of data was a dozen transcripts of regional multi-actor meetings. These regional multi-actor meetings were sometimes discussion evenings, but also included meetings of the formal regional multi-actor platform. These transcripts provided us with information about the kind of arguments that actors put forward in interaction and which arguments were accepted as being credible by other actors, thus revealing the influence of the various actors.

Table 1 Overview of persons interviewed

Persons interviewed	Number of interviews
Villagers (not farmers)	19
Farmers	12 (2 farmers were interviewed twice)
Conservationists	10 (1 person was interviewed twice)
Provincial officials	4
Water Board	1
Tourism representatives	3
Small villages representatives	2
National Landscape officials	7 (2 people were interviewed twice)
Others	2
Total	60

As a third data source, we reviewed the available literature to find publications relating to the Drentsche Aa area. We used the library of Wageningen University, the library of Groningen University and the library of the regional branch of the National Forestry Service in the province of Drenthe as a basis. This search yielded a list of over 382 documents that had been published on the Drentsche Aa area. To find out which documents would be relevant for us to collect and analyse, we asked our respondents in the interviews to name the documents that they considered important for the policy events. These documents (research reports, policy documents, articles etc.) were then collected and analysed. In total, about 20 documents were analysed, and these served as background information to help us gain a better understanding of the situation or the events. Since not all respondents identified the same documents in relation to the same events, the documents also gave us insights into the respondents' construction of the events.

Fourth, we carried out an archive study to trace correspondence, e-mails, minutes of meetings and clippings from two regional newspapers. These data were not meant to find out the 'truth' and/or to put the responses of the interviewees to the test. Rather, the additional data were used to examine the context of the policy outcome that citizen involvement had led to and the policy process that led to this outcome.

1.3.6 Analysis

We used the above data to analyse the practices that actors engaged in to express their involvement in nature conservation policy and nature. We primarily focused on 'what people do', their motivation for this and the consequences of their actions. From our complete list of practices we selected several sub-cases (e.g. the Regional Advisory Committee or the Preparatory Committee) for further analysis. Our analysis focused on the kinds of actors involved in the policy process and their influence on the outcome of the process, as well as the concrete practices that citizens engaged in to express their involvement in nature and landscape policy.

Our analysis was inspired by what has been referred to as 'the narrative turn in research methodology' (Flyvbjerg, personal communication⁵). We started by presenting the concrete details of the subcases in a chronological order as if they were the product of a unique and 'naturally unfolding' sequence of events. In this 'story', we focused on specific individuals and their actions. When writing down the story, we constantly asked ourselves 'who did what to whom, when, where, how, why and with what kind of consequences' to capture as much detail as possible. The first step in our analysis therefore appeared in the way we organised the data for presentation.

We then moved from the description of an event or social setting to a more general interpretation of its meaning. We did this by reading our empirical story and constantly asking ourselves what this could mean in relation to our concepts. While studying, for example, the cases relating to multi-actor governance we first asked ourselves: 'Who is involved?' We then asked ourselves which arguments were used by the various actors. We also asked ourselves if these arguments were taken seriously by other actors and what their influence was on the outcome of the policy formulation process. To find out about this, we had to turn to the transcripts of meetings and compare who said what during such meetings with what had been written down in the policy documents (or draft versions thereof) that were written as an outcome of the process. By organising our data while analysing and applying our ideas simultaneously, we created a specific sub-case, which is how we combined data with theory.

⁵ Communicated during the 'Narrative turn in research methodology' course at Aalborg, November 2006.

While the analysis remained close to the original data and context, the subsequent interpretation was more than a simple description. The analysis organised specific details into a coherent picture or set of interlocking concepts.

This analysis has yielded a rich story based on the descriptions that the actors, media and documents gave us. Like a traveller reporting about a foreign land, our account is an interpretation intended to offer valuable insights to our readers about governance and citizen involvement.

1.3.7 Outline of the report

In this chapter we have outlined why and how we decided to carry out this study on the involvement of citizens and the construction of citizenship in governance practices in the Drentsche Aa area in the Netherlands. We outlined the debates on governance, citizen involvement and citizenship, and discussed the methodology that we used to address the research questions.

Chapter 2 describes the context of this study by giving an historical overview of the relevant developments in the Drentsche Aa area that have led to the creation of the multi-actor platform. We also offer the background information that is needed to understand the practices by means of which citizens become involved in nature and landscape policy, as well as the citizens' influence on the outcome of these practices.

Chapters 3 and 4 present the empirical results of the case study. They discuss the governance practices of the multi-actor platform and the way in which the platform functions. These chapters study the way in which the new National Landscape formula was negotiated. They give insight into the new governance practices as well as the way in which citizens are involved in these practices.

Chapter 5 reflects on the results of chapters 3 and 4 by discussing the specific practices in which citizen involvement was expressed and by discussing the various constructions of citizens and citizenship that resulted from the citizen involvement practices documented in chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 6 reflects on the results and states the conclusions by systematically answering the research questions. It discusses how the results can be understood in terms of governance, citizen involvement and citizenship. The chapter then continues with a general discussion of the study, in which the findings of this study are linked back to existing literature.

2 Context – a historical overview of the Drentsche Aa case

Before we present the results of the study, let us first consider the Drentsche Aa area (2.1) and show the process that have led to the creation of the multi-actor platform (2.2). This will allow us to present some background information which is important for understanding the issues that are presented in the subsequent results chapters.

2.1 Description of the area

Van Bommel and Roling (2004) describe that the Drentsche Aa is the name of a system of small streams that originate on the plateaus of glacial and eolian sands in the Province of Drenthe, in the north of the Netherlands. Together they constitute one of the last relatively unspoilt river systems on the North German Plain.

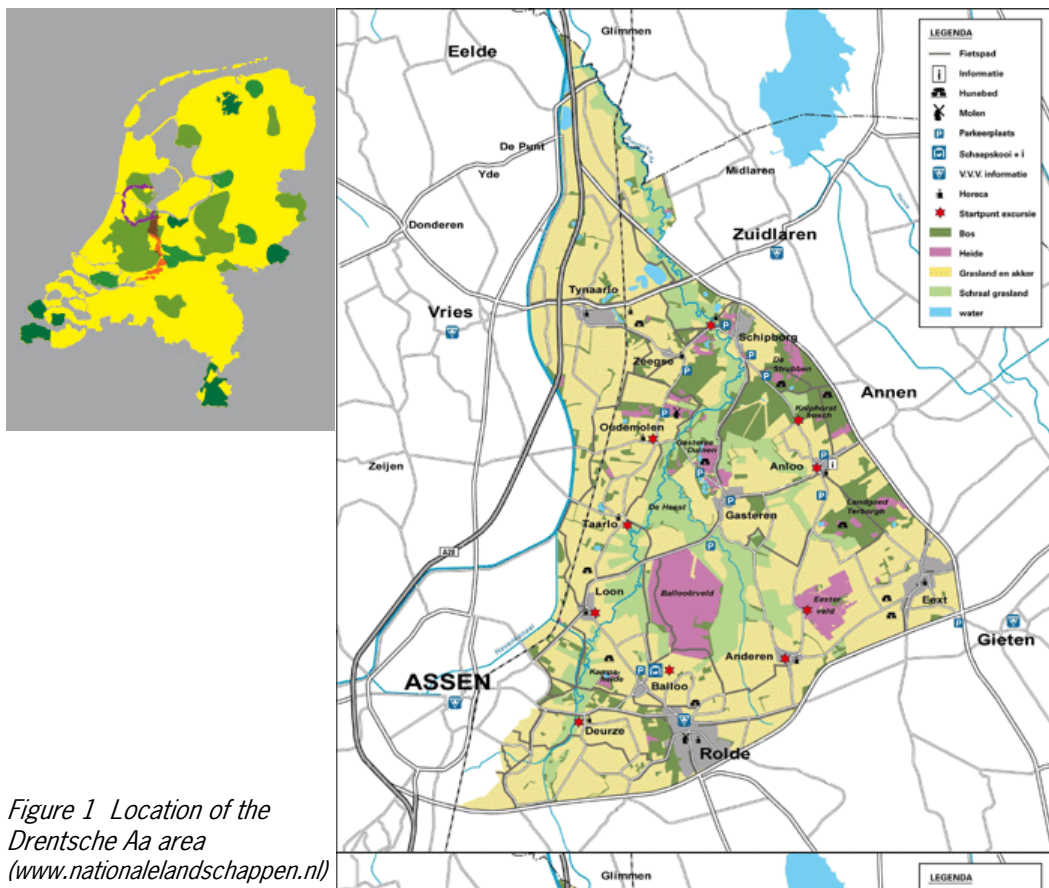


Figure 1 Location of the Drentsche Aa area (www.nationalelandschappen.nl)

The area is considered unique in terms of bio-diversity, landscape and natural beauty. Wet meadows, known as 'brook meadows' border the small streams that meander through the wide valleys scooped out during the last ice age. The area has been farmed for some 4000 years and is dotted with prehistoric megaliths (locally known as 'Huns' beds'). The Drentsche Aa is therefore not a pristine natural area, but an ancient farmed landscape. The unique

characteristics of the landscape are the result of generations of farmers trying to eke out an existence on very poor sandy soils.

Over many centuries, the farmers in the area developed a unique farming system that was well adapted to the extreme poverty of the soils. After the original tree cover had been removed, heather species (*Calluna*, *Erica*) colonised the plateaus and farmers grazed large flocks of sheep on this common moorland. During the night, the sheep were kept in a deep litter fold ('potstal') that allowed their manure to accumulate. To add to this litter, farmers regularly cut the topsoil on the moorland and mixed it in with the manure. The litter from the sheepfolds was then used on relatively small arable fields or 'essen' near the villages. Over the centuries, these practices raised the elevation of these lands, so that they clearly stand out today. A very large area of moorland was thus 'mined' by the sheep and by turf cutting in order to maintain the fertility of a relatively small arable area.

The brook meadows formed a third and indispensable element in the farming system. These wet meadows were mainly used for hay making during the summer. The cattle kept by local farmers had evolved into a special breed, the Drentsche Koe, which could survive the lack of minerals, especially zinc, in the diet derived from these poor soils. It became extinct in the 1930s because it was considered 'a backward animal' that held no promise for use in modern agriculture.

A fourth element in the system were small scattered fields and meadows on the slopes of the plateaus, on which buckwheat and rye were produced, and cattle grazed. These small elements were important from the point of view of bio-diversity, e.g., as a habitat for Black Grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*), which some elderly locals still fondly remember as a game bird but has long since become extinct in the area.

As a result of the high water tables and the continuous removal of organic material over the centuries, a very rich and diverse herbal flora has developed. This diversity is largely determined by the seepage and subterranean circulation of water through layers of soil varying in mineral composition, but peat formation has also added to the richness of the herbal tapestry.

In the 1960s, the landscape variety and the biodiversity that the old type of farming had generated were threatened by agricultural modernisation, including the heavy use of fertilisers, pesticides and machinery, land consolidation, drainage, river canalisation and so on, that swept across age-old landscapes all over Europe. The late Harry de Vroome, who was then a landscape architect with the National Forestry Service (SBB), took the initiative to halt this destruction in the Drentsche Aa area. At the time, purchasing land from farmers was the only option for conservation. SBB, which already owned some state forests that were originally meant for wood production, was charged with the management of these lands. The brook meadows are the primary object of nature conservation in the area.

In addition to these brook meadows, the area is marked by undulating plateaus, clustered villages on the plateaus ('esdorpen') with their old arable fields ('essen'), and the remains of the moorland on which the sheep used to roam. In all, the area annually draws about a million tourists, mainly day visitors (walking and bicycling) from the cities of Groningen and Assen that border the area.

The area not only serves conservation and tourist interests, however. Farming is a major industry, and large arable farms have been established on the former moorland, which was made possible by the advent of fertilisers. Dairy farms are found in the lower areas. Farming and nature conservation do not find it easy to coexist.

2.2 Policy history

2.2.1 A top-down National Park?

Because of the unique characteristics of the Drentsche Aa area, the regional branch of the National Forestry Service wanted the area to be assigned the status of 'National Park'. To the National Forestry Service, the status of a National Park would mean the ultimate recognition for 30 years of hard work.

In the late 1980s, the regional branch of the National Forestry Service felt that the time had come to give it a try. They relied on their decades old coalition with the provincial authorities to get the process going. Their lobbying paid off. They managed to convince the Drenthe provincial authorities, who started a procedure to have the Drentsche Aa area declared a National Park. The provincial authorities first contacted the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries. The Ministry contacted the Provisional Committee on National Parks⁶ and asked them for advice on whether or not it would be wise to declare the Drentsche Aa area a National Park. The Provisional Committee was faced with a dilemma: they were in favour of the idea, but the system of National Parks did not include the category of 'brook valleys' at that time. Therefore, in 1993, the Provisional Committee on National Parks proposed to add this category to the Dutch National Park system and proposed to define the Drentsche Aa area as an exemplary area for this new category (VCNP, 1993). The then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries followed the advice of the Provisional Committee and in 1993 the Drentsche Aa was included as a potential future National Park in the National Structure Plan for Green Areas (*Structuurschema Groene Ruimte*). At the provincial level, the status of 'potential future National Park' for the Drentsche Aa area was adopted in the Provincial Nature Policy Plan and in the Provincial Spatial Plan (see also Padt & Leroy, 2006).

2.2.2 ROM project and WCL project

While the process to get the area recognised as a National Park continued, two interesting governance initiatives were started by the national government and were taken up by the Drenthe provincial authorities: the Project on Spatial Planning and the Environment (ROM project) of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the project on 'Valuable Cultural Landscapes' (WCL project) of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries.

In the early 1990s, the Drentsche Aa area was declared a 'Spatial Planning and Environmental Policy Area' (ROM area). The ROM policy aimed at reconciling economic activities with housing and environmental functions in an area in order to guarantee liveability and environmental quality. The ROM policy tried to achieve this by means of negotiations among important actors such as policy makers, companies, residents, etc. The ROM policy in the Drentsche Aa area was initiated by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. In 1991, both the Drenthe provincial authorities and the Ministry started looking into the possibility of starting an ROM project in Drenthe. The Drentsche Aa area was envisaged as a pilot area for experimenting with Area Based Policy⁷ for the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. The Drenthe provincial authorities agreed and on 11 August 1992, the then Minister, Hans Alders, sent a letter to the Drenthe authorities in which he officially gave them

⁶ Provisional Committee for National Parks: Voorlopige Commissie Nationale Parken: an independent advisory committee on National Parks of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries.

⁷ Area Based Policy: 'Gebiedsgerichtbeleid': an integrated approach to the management of the rural areas, including a lot of participatory initiatives.

permission to start the ROM project. This was the first time that the provincial authorities started experimenting with involving non-traditional policy actors in the policy process.

Just after the ROM project of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment had started, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries came up with its own ROM-like policy, called the policy on Valuable Cultural Landscapes (WCL). The Valuable Cultural Landscapes were areas with special qualities in terms of landscape, nature and/or cultural history that the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to support. The aim was to conserve and improve the special qualities of such areas. New developments would have to be in harmony with the character of the area and were not allowed to harm nature or the environment. This included a re-definition of agriculture. The project on Valuable Cultural Landscapes took the National Structure Plan for Green Areas⁸ as its point of departure. After some discussion, the provincial authorities decided to accept the WCL status, in addition to the ROM status. It was decided that the two policies could very well complement each other. Hence, the Drentsche Aa area was given a double status: it was already an ROM area, but on 12 July 1994 it was given the status of a 'Valuable Cultural Landscape' (WCL) as well (see also Padt & Leroy, 2006).

The ROM/WCL project was a project that gave the province the opportunity to gain some practice with multi-actor governance approaches. Both projects involved non-traditional actors in addition to traditional policy actors.

2.2.3 A top-down National Park? No!

While the ROM/WCL negotiations were going on, the Provisional Committee had successfully managed to add the category of 'brooklet valleys' to the National Parks system. This meant that in 1996, the Provisional Committee on National Parks (the committee advising the Ministry) could finally start to study the conditions under which the Drentsche Aa area could be declared a National Park. They soon found that the Drentsche Aa was the subject of a fierce conflict between farmers and conservationists that dated back more than 40 years. Because of this conflict, the Provisional Committee feared that there would be little public support for a National Park. They therefore decided to ask all major actors (several governmental bodies,⁹ organisations representing specific interests,¹⁰ land owners,¹¹ drinking water companies and citizens) for their opinions on the plans for declaring the area a National Park, as was the usual procedure at the time when establishing new National Parks. The provincial executive¹² immediately reacted favourably in a letter to the Provisional Committee, but the farmers and the farmers' organisation were less enthusiastic. Two meetings were organised in the region, to which all actors were invited. During the meetings, information was provided about the plans, and actors could respond to these plans. These meetings became opportunities for large numbers of farmers to vent their frustration. For decades, the farmers had been resisting the activities of conservationists in the Drentsche Aa area and now pent-up

⁸ National Structure Plan for Green Areas: 'Structuurschema Groene Ruimte': a policy document which reflects the views of the National government on nature and rural areas

⁹ the provincial authorities of Drenthe and Groningen, the municipal authorities of the towns of Haren, Vries, Zuid Laren, Anloo, Assen and Rolde, the Hunze and Aa District Water Board, the Governmental Recreation Board, the Ministry of Defence and the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries.

¹⁰ Recreational organisations, agricultural organisations, Drenthe environmental federation and the IVN ecological education organisation

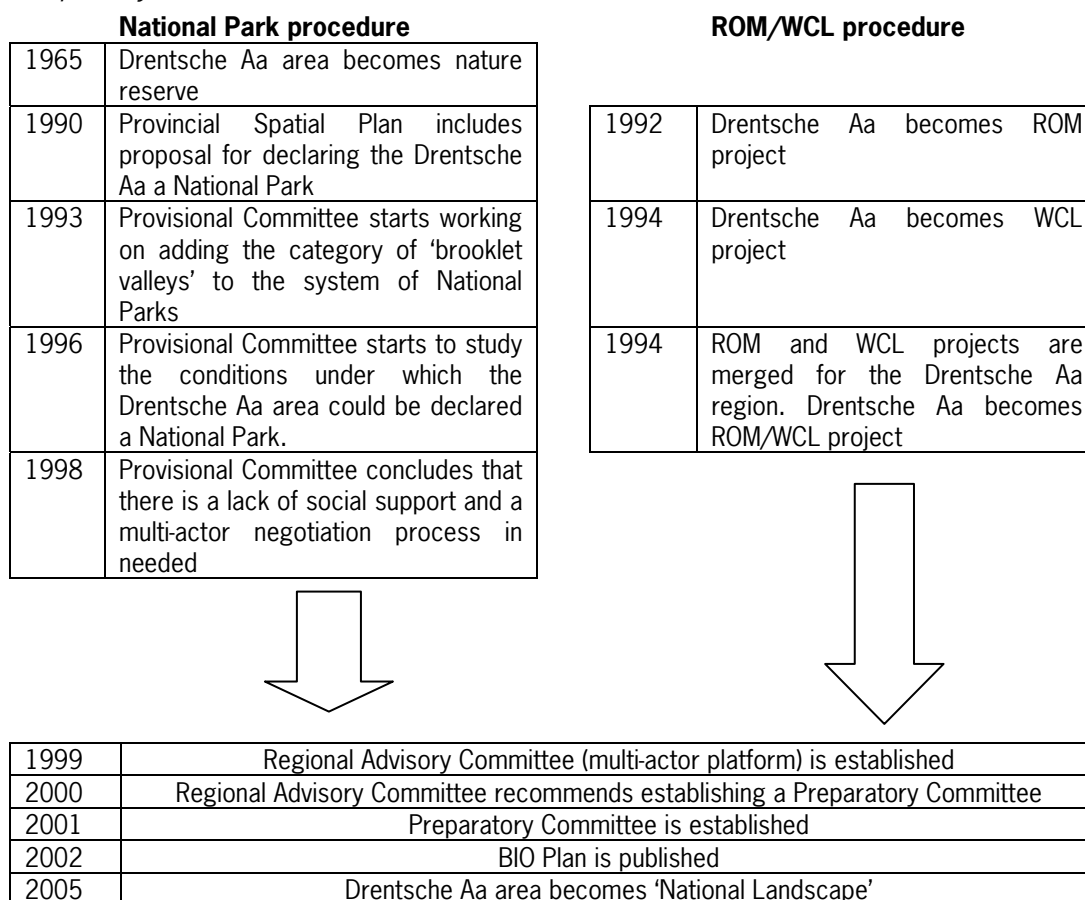
¹¹ The National Forestry Service and the Natuurmonumenten and Drenthsch Landschap conservation societies

¹² Provincial executive: 'Gedeputeerde Staten', i.e. the provincial administrative body, elected by the Provincial Council, consisting of the Provincial Executive Councillors and the Queen's Commissioner.

resentment boiled over. The Provisional Committee was faced with angry farmers who resisted the proposed policy changes, which they felt would adversely affect their lives (Van Bommel & Roling, 2004). There was a huge wave of public protest against the perceived elitist attitude of the policy makers and experts who wanted to declare the Drentsche Aa area a National Park. The Provisional Committee on National Parks was worried about the reaction of the farmers, because they felt that this lack of public support could become a serious barrier to the implementation of the plans. They had intensively consulted all stakeholders in the area. To avoid open conflict and direct confrontations, the Provisional Committee felt that it would be better to start a multi-actor negotiation process, hoping that this process could overcome resistance by providing a broad basis of public support for the outcome of the policy process. They advised the Minister to install a Regional Advisory Committee in the Drentsche Aa area. This Committee was to be given the task of exploring the opportunities for creating a National Park with 'extended objectives', in which agriculture would be given a realistic place.

On 6 July 1998, the Provisional Committee reported the results of their investigations to the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries (VCNP, 1998). The Minister accepted their advice and decided to implement the Committee's plan: a multi-actor negotiation platform to be created in the Drentsche Aa area to negotiate the future status of the area (see also Table 2).

Table 2 Time line showing the main policy events that led to the establishment of the multi-actor Preparatory Committee in the Drentsche Aa area



Since 1998, 10 years have passed, in which the multi-actor negotiation platform was installed and became operational. During those 10 years, the platform decided to declare the area a National Landscape rather than a National Park, because a National Landscape offers more room for agriculture and villages, in addition to conservation areas, than a National Park. At first, this National Landscape was also called a 'National Park with extended objectives', the 'extended objectives' referring to the multi-functional approach. The multi-actor platform formulated a policy plan, the BIO Plan, to guide the implementation of the National Landscape. This policy plan is now being implemented. In the following chapters we discuss in detail what happened during the process of formulating this BIO Plan.

This chapter has addressed some important developments in the Drentsche Aa area which have led to the creation of a multi-actor platform to formulate and implement policy for the area. As its name implies, platform involved multiple actors, including citizens, in the policy process.

The following chapters discuss in detail how the policy was formulated and implemented by this multi-actor platform. Chapter 3 discusses the involvement of the various representatives in the formulation and early implementation of the BIO Plan, while chapter 4 discusses the involvement of the constituencies in this process. This discussion reveals the practices ensuing from the aim of Dutch nature and landscape policy to involve multiple actors in the policy process and by which citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy.

3 Representatives' involvement in the BIO Plan for the Drentsche Aa area

This chapter 'zooms in' on the multi-actor platforms that led to the formulation of the BIO Plan, namely the Regional Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee. We selected these two multi-actor platforms because these were very influential with regard to the formulation and implementation of nature and landscape policy in the Drentsche Aa area, thus offering some insights into the practices by which citizens express their involvement and that follow from the aim of Dutch nature conservation policy to involve multiple actors in the policy process.

3.1 The Regional Advisory Committee

After the Provisional Committee for National Parks had advised the Ministry to install a multi-actor platform in the Drentsche Aa area to negotiate the future status of the area, the Drenthe provincial authorities brought together a coalition of actors from the region. On 2 February 1999, a letter, signed by the then State Secretary (junior minister), Geke Faber, was sent out to all major actors with claims on the area – including the farmers' union NLTO, the National Forestry Service, a drinking water company that was extracting water from deep wells, the tourist industry, the provincial authorities of the Province of Drenthe, the City Council of Assen (the capital of Drenthe), the Hunze and Aas District Water Board, and others – inviting them to appoint a representative to the so-called 'Regional Advisory Committee'. The organisations chose their representatives and this resulted in the establishment of the Regional Advisory Committee. Box 1 lists the bodies represented in this Committee.

Given the history of conflict in the area, the State Secretary for Agriculture carefully chose as the chairman of the Regional Advisory Committee someone who was 'independent' and had no previous ties with the area. The secretariat was given to the Government Service for Land and Water Management (Dienst Landelijk Gebied) in Drenthe¹³.

Box 1: Composition of the Regional Advisory Committee

- Organisation of tourist operators RECRON/Recreatieschap
- National Forestry Service (SBB)
- Natuurmonumenten (NGO engaged in nature conservation)
- Farmers' organisation (NLTO)
- Hunze and Aas District Water Board
- 'Comprehensive Consultation Group on Small Villages in Drenthe' (BOKD)
- City of Groningen Water Company
- Municipal councils of Hunze and Aas, Assen, Tynaarlo.
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Provincial authorities of Drenthe

¹³ Government Service for Land and Water Management: Dienst Landelijk Gebied (DLG): a governmental executive agency of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The agency translates government policies into practical rural development measures and operates at national, regional and local levels.

The Regional Advisory Committee thus included not only the traditional policy actors such as representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Drenthe provincial authorities, but also non-traditional actors – such as representatives of the NLTO farmers' union, the BOKD association,¹⁴ representing the interests of small villages, and the tourist industry.

3.2 Developing the advice

The letter by the State Secretary of 23 October 1998 assigned to the Regional Advisory Committee the task of elaborating on the Provisional Committee's advice:

'The Drentsche Aa Regional Advisory Committee is charged with advising me on the form that a consultation structure for the Drentsche Aa area should take – as is usual procedure for the establishment of National Parks – following the Provisional Committee's advice. I also request the Advisory Committee to inform me with regard to the boundaries of the area [...], including the question whether or not a part of the Province of Groningen should be included within the boundaries of the area. The unusual aspect of the task of the Regional Advisory Committee is that I ask it to investigate the possibilities of establishing a National Park with extended objectives. This has to be elaborated in such a way that, in addition to other actors, the agricultural sector can participate in the consultation structure as well as in the management of the landscape of the Drentsche Aa area.'

The Regional Advisory Committee would thus have to decide on the boundaries of the area, but more importantly they had to decide on the appropriate 'consultation structure' for policy implementation in the Drentsche Aa area. While considering this appropriate 'structure', they had to investigate the opportunities for establishing a National Park with 'extended objectives'. The Provisional Committee's advice only stated that the 'extended objectives' would have to be less sector-specific and more comprehensive than the usual objectives. Their brief was not at all clear on what these 'extended objectives' meant nor what the 'consultation structure' was supposed to look like.

3.3 The final advice

When the Regional Advisory Committee started working on the basis of the Provisional Committee's advice, it was unclear to the participants what kind of role they were expected to play in the process. The letter sent by the State Secretary to the participants of the Regional Advisory Committee read:

'Because of the new kind of approach [a National Park with extended objectives], I invite you to take part in a open exchange of ideas with regard to the form and the content of extended objectives, which should be based on existing policy.' (Letter by the State Secretary, 23 October 1998)

On the one hand, this 'open exchange of ideas' implied an open-ended process during which all actors could put forward their ideas. It also implied the promise that the participating actors would be offered a certain influence on the form and content of the extended objectives. On the other hand, the letter also implied a constraint, namely that the ideas would have to be

¹⁴ BOKD: '*Brede Overleggroep Kleine Dorpen*': Association to promote cooperation among small villages in Drenthe, largely focusing on the preservation of the area's historical values and the liveability of the villages

based on existing policy. Some parties in the Drentsche Aa area already had some experience with multi-actor negotiation from the WCL/ROM project, although for most of the members of the Committee it was the first time they had participated in such a process, so was an entirely new situation to them. During the first meeting, held in the village of Zeegse on 9 February 1999, the committee members discussed their roles. They decided that the combination of an open exchange of ideas and ideas being 'based on' existing policy meant that the ideas did not have to comply fully with existing policy.

Although the participants had thus decided that being based on existing policy plans did not mean that their ideas had to comply fully with existing policy, the existing policy plans were nevertheless given an important status. By way of preparation for the second meeting, an overview of all existing policy plans for the Drentsche Aa region was sent to participants. The overview was called 'points of departure for policy', a title which suggested that there would be little room for departing from the existing policy. The debate that ensued suggests that although the group had initially decided that their role and responsibility was to formulate a plan that did not have to comply fully with existing policy, this decision was soon renegotiated by the provincial representatives. Indeed, the final version of the Regional Advisory Committee's advisory report states:

'The Regional Advisory Committee has taken the existing policy at national, provincial and municipal levels, as well as the regional water board's policy, as the point of departure for its explorations of the opportunities for a National Park with extended objectives. A National Park with extended objectives has to contribute to the implementation of these policies.' (Regional Advisory Committee, 1999 pp 7)

Parallel and linked to this renegotiation of roles and responsibilities, the members of the Regional Advisory Committee had to formulate recommendations about the nature of the 'extended objectives'. What they needed most was a clear vision on which all actors could agree. Hans Elerie¹⁵ – on behalf of the BOKD – noted that during the discussions notions such as 'an identity strategy' and 'a living landscape' kept cropping up. For example, after the first meeting a note summarising the main features of the meeting was sent to the participants to help them reflect upon the issues. The note stated:

'These are issues that came up repeatedly during the discussions and therefore form a common element in the responses:

- *Giving a prominent place to historical values.*
- *Perceiving the landscape as a combination of agriculture and nature.*
- *Aiming at a 'living landscape' with a clear identity.*
- *The future of sustainable agriculture.*
- *Taking liveability, employment and income into account.*
- *Taking the housing function into account.*
- *Taking the possibilities of water management (in terms of quality and quantity) into account.*
- *Recreation and tourism should be in harmony with the area.*
- *Linking up with other policy plans.*
- *From a win-lose situation to a win – win situation' (Note circulated after the first meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee in Zeegse on 9 February 1999)*

¹⁵ An expert on cultural history who had done his PhD research on the history of one of the villages in Drenthe.

This note shows that the issues of sustainable agriculture and a 'living landscape with a clear identity' were seen as two of the important issues by the participating actors. There was a call for multi-functional land use. Elerie noted that these notions were enthusiastically embraced by all members of the Regional Advisory Committee. He was invited to specify these notions within the regional context of the Drentsche Aa area. During the meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee in Assen on 9 July 1999, Elerie presented his vision to the other members:

'When dealing with the conservation and development of landscape values and ecological values in the Drentsche Aa area, it is wise to focus our attention on identity formers and identity carriers. This has to do with the region's specific characteristics and developments that together give the area its specific character and will form its new "face" in the future. We can convincingly speak of a "living landscape" that has been able to hold on to its identity throughout the ages and despite constant change..... In the identity strategy we will consciously deal with the intrinsic dynamics, and changes will be linked to an active conservation policy. In short, the identity strategy will rely on the adage "conservation through renewal"..... One of the most important tasks for the identity strategy is to keep the process of identity formation going in times of high dynamics and functional change.'

Elerie – of behalf of the BOKD – chose the concept of 'identity' as his leading principle. He operationalised it in a way that reflects the identity of the landscape in terms of 'a living landscape'. Elerie carefully and explicitly linked his vision to existing policy plans – such as the Fifth Policy Document on Spatial Planning and its 'Belvedere' project – which also used regional diversity and landscape identity as important points of departure (see box 1). He also linked the identity strategy to the notion of 'conservation through renewal', which had its origin in the 'Belvedere' project. The notion of 'conservation through renewal' – as used by Elerie – proved a powerful concept to bridge the divide between the farmers and the National Forestry Service at an abstract level. It offered room for agriculture as well as for nature conservation because both contributed to landscape formation. According to Elerie, the landscape is not the sum of all individual land use systems but is a coherent complex in which nature conservation as well as agriculture play important parts. Both agriculture and nature conservation are very important for the diversity in terms of landscape types and the identity of the Drentsche Aa landscape. He wanted the various values¹⁶ and functions¹⁷ that have formed the landscape to be taken into account (conservation) but he also wanted these to be integrated with the values and functions that the landscape now has (through renewal). Although different actors had different ideas about the practical implications of the notion of 'conservation through renewal', all actors agreed with it at an abstract level (see also Box 1).

Now that the Regional Advisory Committee had a vision to base their advice on, the debate soon revolved around the notion of 'conservation through renewal'. It proved a powerful concept that created consensus, or at least a semblance of consensus, among the members of the Committee.

¹⁶ e.g. historical, archaeological and ecological values

¹⁷ e.g. recreation, agriculture, housing or nature conservation

Box 1 The 'Belvedere' policy document

Just as the multi-actor negotiation platform was having its first few meetings in the Drentsche Aa area in 1999, a new policy document was published in the Hague. The multi-actor negotiation platform was immediately very interested in this new 'Belvedere' policy, which addressed the conservation of the historical identity of important areas in the Netherlands. The Belvedere policy was a joint effort by four Ministries: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the then Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fisheries, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management. In the Belvedere policy document, the government acknowledged that historical values could be an important source of inspiration for spatial planning. This placed the conservation of historical elements on the agenda. The Belvedere policy document did not have the status of a law, but was an important source of inspiration for provincial and local policy in the Drentsche Aa area, and as such was quite influential in development and planning in this area.

With the Belvedere approach, the historical identity of the Drentsche Aa area became an important guiding principle for the spatial planning and use of the area. It presented a vision of how to take into account and conserve the historical values when planning spatial developments. It also indicated what measures had to be taken.

At a national level, the Belvedere policy document was an important building block for the Fifth Policy Document on Spatial Planning, the policy document in which 20 areas in the Netherlands, including the Drentsche Aa, were assigned the status of National Landscapes.

Instead of a National Park, the Regional Advisory Committee decided to aim for a National Landscape.

'When we started the whole process, we already knew that we would finally become a kind of National Park anyway. However, there was a lot of resistance to the name "National Park" in the area. At that time, the National Landscape concept was being revived, so for strategic reasons we called it a National Brook and Village Landscape, because we figured that if the concept of National Landscape was indeed going to be the new fashion, then at least we would fall into that category as well. That would give us sources of funding in future. It was a means to both ends.' (Chairman, interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006)

The 'National Landscape' formula was chosen deliberately. In a National Park, all land use is dedicated to the 'Nature' and 'Recreation' functions, while in a National Landscape (or 'a National Park with extended objectives') multifunctional land use is also accepted. Hence, the 'National Landscape' label led to less resistance than the 'National Park' label.

On 19 November 1999, the Regional Advisory Committee published the first official draft of its advisory report. This draft used the concepts of 'identity of the landscape' and 'conservation through renewal' as cornerstones for the future development of the area. The document states:

'The committee feels that "extended objectives" can be accomplished by means of an "identity strategy". This is a strategy that aims at "conservation through renewal" by taking the identity of the landscape as the point of departure..... Identity is the best basis on which participation by the villagers and users (agriculture and nature) as well as their support can be organized.' (Draft version of the advice of the Regional Advisory Committee, 19 November 1999)

This shows that the wording of the advice of the Regional Advice Committee was heavily influenced by the Belvedere project, as well as the specific way in which the Belvedere concepts were interpreted by Elerie. Elerie's views on landscape identity as well as the concept of 'conservation through renewal' were adopted as important points of departure by the Regional Advisory Committee.

The influence of the farmers' representatives is less clear. Their input cannot be traced in the Committee's advisory report (or its draft versions) as directly as Elerie's input. An example of this is the debate about the meaning of 'diversified agriculture'. Over time, the discussions in the Regional Advisory Committee show that 'diversified agriculture' was interpreted as 'sustainable' agriculture by the Committee. The draft version of the Regional Advisory Committee's report stated:

'The Regional Advisory Committee has formulated the following aims for extended objectives for the Drentsche Aa area on the basis of preliminary findings.....The specific aims are:

- *strengthening cultural identity.*
- *strengthening regional economy, for instance by offering opportunities for the development of sustainable agriculture.*
- *Intensifying countryside stewardship.*

Etc.' (Draft version of the advisory report of the Regional Advisory Committee, 19 November 1999)

During the discussions, it remained unclear to what extent the advice would leave room for intensive modern agriculture in the Drentsche Aa area. The representative of the farmers' union NLTO was not convinced at all that sustainable agriculture could be economically attractive. Even during the first meeting, the farmers' representative said:

'The policy should not aim at conservation. It is important to preserve entrepreneurship. I do not expect my constituency to applaud the current initiative' (Farmers' representative during the first meeting of Regional Advisory Committee in Zeegse, 9 February 1999)

This quote illustrates the importance of agricultural entrepreneurship and an economically viable agriculture for the farmers' representative, as well as his specific way of giving meaning to such entrepreneurship. The farmers' representative feared that sustainable agriculture would not be profitable. He believed that the strategy on 'sustainable agriculture' would lead to a loss of income for farmers. The issue of sustainable agriculture kept coming up time and again during the discussions. This suggests that there was struggle over the way in which this issue was to be included and/or interpreted in the advisory report. There was no clear decision on the issue.

Despite this, the Regional Advisory Committee presented its report to the State Secretary on 23 July 2000. The accompanying letter states:

'The Regional Advisory Committee recommends the appointment of a Regional Preparatory Committee for the implementation of the "National Brook and Village Landscape"....The Committee recommends charging the Regional Preparatory Committee with formulating a "Management, Design and Development Plan" (BIO Plan). The Regional Preparatory Committee should adopt the point of departure recommended in the present advisory report, namely "strengthening the identity of the Drentsche Aa area", as well as encourage the collective strategy of "conservation through renewal" and collaborate with the inhabitants of the region.' (Letter of the Regional Advisory Committee to State Secretary Geke Faber, 23 July 2000)

The Regional Advisory Committee thus advised the State Secretary to appoint a Regional Preparatory Committee and charge them with the formulation of a 'Management, Design and Development Plan', or BIO Plan, for a 'National Brook and Village Landscape Drentsche Aa'. To reassure the local residents, the Regional Advisory Committee promised that the policy plan for the National Landscape would be formulated in a participatory procedure. The Committee left the issue of agriculture (and its diversification) to be discussed and solved by their successors. The State Secretary accepted the recommendations and decided that a Preparatory Committee was needed to implement the advice of the Regional Advisory Committee.

An analysis of the process of formulating the Regional Advisory Committee's advice shows that at the beginning of the negotiations, all roles still had to be decided on. It was a new procedure, which most of the actors involved had never been involved in before. During the meetings, the process as well as the content were negotiated. However, not all actors had equal influence on the formulation of the advice. Whereas Elerie and the 'Nota Belvedere' seem to have had a lot of influence, the farmers' representative, for example, had far less influence on the final advice. For a better understanding of the influence that the various actors had on the policy process in the Drentsche Aa area, we now continue with an analysis of the formulation of the policy plan that followed the Committee's advice.

3.4 The Preparatory Committee

In the spring of 2001, the Preparatory Committee started working on the formulation of the BIO Plan for the Drentsche Aa area, in accordance with the Regional Advisory Committee's recommendations.

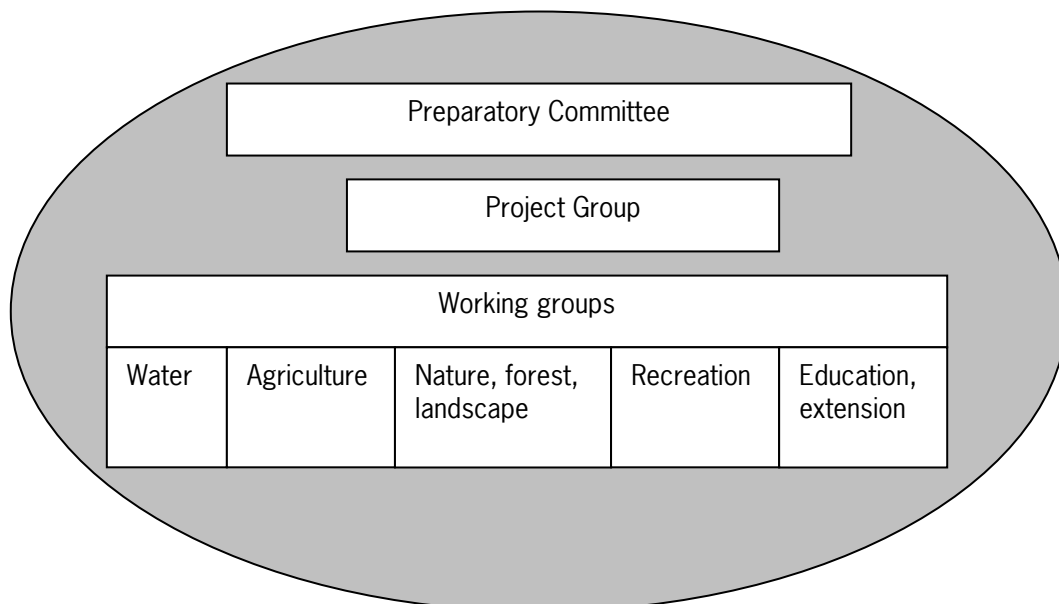


Figure 1 Organisational structure of the Preparatory Committee for a Drentsche Aa National Landscape

The composition of the Preparatory Committee was similar and yet different to that of the Regional Advisory Committee. All organisations and interests that were represented in the Regional Advisory Committee were also represented in all groups and committees that participated in the formulation of the BIO Plan. The working groups developed sector-specific views on water, agriculture, nature conservation, recreation and education. Each of these working groups also consisted of policy makers, conservationists, farmers, tourist operators, etc. The working groups functioned under the leadership of the Project Group. The Preparatory Committee made the decisions. This chapter focuses on the functioning of the Committee. At a certain point in the process, the name of the committee changed into 'Consultation Committee'.

Although the composition of the Committee did not change much in terms of the interests and organisations that were represented (i.e. the actors involved did not change much), it did change in terms of the individuals who represented their organisations. Of the 16 members, only four individuals participated both in the Regional Advisory Committee and in the Preparatory Committee. A representative of the Drenthe provincial authorities acted as secretary, but the chairman remained the same.

Efforts were made to use participatory methods that involved stakeholders in the formulation of the BIO Plan. The process of writing the Plan involved a procedure in which 20 organisations and more than 60 people participated.

Efforts were also made to involve citizens in the formulation of the BIO Plan. First of all, the residents of the Drentsche Aa region were represented in the Preparatory Committee by the BOKD, which had representatives in the Preparatory Committee as well as in the Project Group. In addition to this, the farmers were separately represented by the NLTO (farmers' union), in the Preparatory Committee as well as in the Project Group.

3.5 Developing the BIO Plan

On Monday morning, 29 January 2001, the members of the Preparatory Committee met for the first time at the provincial government building in Assen. The minutes of the meeting show that the meeting was opened by the chairman, who started by explaining the goal of the Preparatory Committee. He stated that the State Secretary had given the Preparatory Committee the task of rapidly formulating a policy for the National Brook and Village Landscape using a multi-functional approach. He also stated that this assignment meant that the Committee was operating partly within the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities. This introduction first of all conveyed a sense of urgency to the members of the platform by emphasising the limited time available for formulating the policy. Secondly, it carved out an important role for the provincial policy makers by stressing that the Preparatory Committee was operating within the jurisdiction of the provincial authorities and by holding the first meeting at the provincial government building in Assen.

This first meeting also showed that there were struggles between the chairman and the platform members about the rules that the participants were expected to adhere to, in terms of what was open to debate and what was not. The members did not automatically agree with the chairman's views and this led to some altercations in which the chairman had to use his position to establish his rules of the game:

Chairman: 'We want to send the people in the area the message that we will not use more consultation structures than strictly necessary. All members of the Preparatory Committee will

be represented in the Project Group. In addition, there will be working groups for themes which are thought to be dominant in the process.'

Representative of the municipality of Aa and Hunze: 'We need a more open approach with more people participating at the bottom.'

Elerie (BOKD): 'Yes, we need more interaction with local groups and local ideas.'

Chairman: 'We just need to discuss the structure. That doesn't mean that it will be a top-down process. However, you need a structure from the start as well as conditions within which the structure can function.' (Meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Assen, 29 January 2001)

This shows that the consultation structure itself was not open to debate. It was not part of the consultation. The participants did not agree with this and tried to throw open the debate about the way the process would be organised. As the Preparatory Committee started with a new team of participants, the roles of the participants had to be renegotiated, as well as the rules of the game. The chairman, who had already had some experience with multi-actor negotiation, had clear ideas about the roles of the participants and the rules of the game. He proposed to work according to the usual negotiation structure developed for National Parks. But his ideas were not automatically accepted by the other participants. The minutes of the meetings show that, especially in the beginning, this forced the chairman into the role of a 'strong leader' in order to convince the participants to accept his leadership and play the game according to his rules. The minutes of the meetings also show that the participants gradually seemed to accept his leadership and his rules.

3.6 The BIO Plan

The way the rules of the game were negotiated in the multi-actor negotiations had consequences for what was finally included in the BIO Plan and what was not. Not all actors had equal influence on the outcome of the negotiation process.

Following the tradition of the Regional Advisory Committee, Elerie had a much greater voice in writing important sections of the Preparatory Committee's advice and the BIO Plan than, for instance, the representatives of the farmers or the National Forestry Service. Elerie's eloquent pleas and the general goodwill towards him had earned him a powerful position in the area. The BIO Plan adopted the 'identity of the landscape' as a point of departure, as well as the notion of 'conservation through renewal':

'One of the points of departure is a landscape-oriented development philosophy called "conservation through renewal". This is a guiding principle for the assessment of plans and projects. This philosophy assumes that the identity of the area can only be conserved and strengthened if the practical value of the area can keep developing and renewing itself. The current landscape and its history are a common basis for this.' (Arcadis, 2002, pp 8)

Elerie's views, at least in writing, had a lot of influence on the formulation of the BIO Plan for the Drentsche Aa area. By taking 'Conservation through Renewal' as a point of departure and by taking 'identity' as a source of inspiration, the BIO Plan closely followed the trend that had been set by the Regional Advisory Committee.

As regards agriculture, for example, the final draft of the BIO Plan explicitly offered scope for farming in the Drentsche Aa area. As the newly created web site www.drentscheaa.nl puts it:

'By taking "Conservation through Renewal" as the guiding image [for the BIO Plan], all parties involved chose to continue to develop, and where necessary to renew, the functions served by the area. It means for example that not only nature, but also agriculture must be able to develop in the Drentsche Aa area. Conservation through Renewal therefore explicitly offers scope for agriculture.' (downloaded in November 2003)

Despite this explicit scope for farming, the farmers' representatives did not agree with the opportunities that the final draft of the BIO Plan offered for agriculture. The minutes of the meetings show that the farmers' representatives reacted to it during the meetings:

'We need much more debate on agriculture in the Drentsche Aa region. At this moment, the draft focuses mainly on sustainable agriculture and assumes that conventional agriculture is not feasible. This does not fit in with the way that my constituency perceives the situation. Nor does it reflect what is being discussed in the working group on agriculture and what the working group has formulated.... There are basically three groups of farmers, namely those who want to stay, those who want to leave and those who want to engage in diversified agriculture. The document does not pay attention to these differences' (Farmers' representative, during the meeting of Preparatory Committee on 8 October 2001)

The farmers' representative felt that the BIO Plan paid insufficient attention to conventional intensive farming. He wanted the BIO Plan to pay explicit attention to the views of those farmers in the area who wanted to continue their conventional farming practices. He felt that the document marginalised this group.

'The BIO Plan explicitly states that there should be a future for farmers in this area. We [the farmers] have put a lot of time into the formulation of the BIO Plan and although officially there is space for us, in practice there is not.' (Farmers' representative interviewed in Rolde on 1 July 2003)

Although the BIO Plan reaffirmed time and again that there should be opportunities for farming in the Drentsche Aa, and that the Drentsche Aa cannot preserve its character without farmers, the farmers felt that it offered very little in terms of concrete prospects.

To find out if certain types of knowledge were more influential than others, we identified situations in which scientific knowledge was used and situations in which local knowledge was used to legitimise a particular argument. We compared these two types of situations in terms of the extent to which we could trace the argument in the subsequent (draft) versions of the BIO Plan.

The meeting on 8 October 2001 is an example of scientific knowledge being used in the negotiation process. The members of the Preparatory Committee were discussing a draft version of the BIO Plan. There was a debate about water as a basis for spatial planning and as a basis for experiencing the landscape of the Drentsche Aa:

Farmers representative: 'I find the general tendency of chapter three to be biased towards nature. With regard to the improvement of water quality, data from Waproog show that there is no problem of water quality.'

Chairman: 'Water quality is indeed an important issue that we need to look into.' (Meeting of the Preparatory Committee on 8 October 2001)

The discussion then moves on to the next point.

This example shows that the farmers' representative feels that nature conservation issues are given too much weight, which is threatening to him. He refers to scientific research that has been carried out (the Waprog study) to argue that the water quality in the Drentsche Aa area is fine. The chairman of the Preparatory Committee accepts the legitimacy of the argument, and the comment by the farmers' representative is taken seriously. This exchange shows that scientific knowledge used by farmers is accepted by the multi-actor platform. But that is not the whole story.

The following discussion, at a meeting in Assen on 19 November 2001, illustrates that in other cases, local knowledge is also used in the discussions. During this meeting, it is unclear to the farmer's representative if there will be opportunities for intensive farming in the Drentsche Aa in the future or not. The farmers' representative brings up the issue of intensive farming:

Farmer: 'I see certain contradictions in chapter 4. If I take a look at the general aim then a lot of revenues have to come from off-farm activities. With hindsight, based on experience, I can look at the last 30 years and see what happened. With some foresight I can also predict what is going to happen in the next 10 years. Many farms will disappear and the farms that survive will intensify to remain profitable. Part of their income will be generated by other activities. But if I read this chapter, I feel that the focus is on the off-farm activities. In my view, the chapter a certain concreteness.'

Chairman: 'We need to be explicit on certain issues, for instance by coming up with specific ideas. We need a story that also takes into account the future of the professional intensive agriculture. We need to know how many plots will be vacated the next few years. We also need to know which claims the National Ecological Network has on the area. I would want this to be taken up.' (Meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Assen on 19 November 2001)

In this case, the farmers' representative refers to local knowledge (experience) to legitimise his objections. His argument refers to a claim of professional skill. He refers to his professional experience from decades of farming and growing up in a farming family. Again, his comment is taken seriously by the chairman during the discussion. The chairman promises that the issue will be taken into account. This exchange shows that local knowledge used by farmers is accepted by the multi-actor platform as well. From the minutes of the meetings it remains unclear if, and if so how, this issue was pursued later.

These examples illustrate the general findings that, in principle, all types of knowledge were taken seriously in the negotiation process. This means that the type of knowledge with which the actors legitimised their arguments cannot explain the unequal influence of some actors as compared to others. The question therefore remains: why did some actors have more influence than others? As the context is very important in case study research, we turned to the context in an attempt to find an answer to this question.

We decided to go back to the interviewees and look for our answers there. When asked about the perceived greater influence of some actors on the formulation of the BIO Plan as compared to others, the chairman told us:

'It has never been our intention to formulate new policy. We have always tried to take existing policy as a point of departure as much as possible. The provincial spatial plan was a guiding principle.' (Chairman interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006)

Apparently, then, the policy context was even more important than we first thought and the provincial spatial planning document (*Provinciaal Omgevingsplan* or POP) was one of the existing policy plans that functioned as an important guiding principle.

In a different interview, a provincial official told us:

'There are certain areas in the National Landscape in which you would actually want to give priority to nature conservation in the future. You don't want intensive modern farms in those areas. But what if a farmer does not cooperate? You can't force the farmer to leave, because everything should be on a voluntary basis. Well what we can do then is just not give him any new permits e.g. to build new stables or for further drainage measures¹⁸. Our policy in that area is habitat development and the policy is the guiding principle. So that farmer will be in the "wrong" place at the "wrong" time.' (Provincial representative interviewed in Assen on 21 August 2003)

This shows that the multi-actor platform was indeed meant to function within the boundaries set by overall national and supra-national policies, such as the POP and the National Ecological Network, resulting in various policy measures. The outcome of the negotiations had to stay within the boundaries defined by existing provincial and national policies.

This also explains why some actors had more influence than others. Having to function within the terms of the existing policy framework had consequences for the amount of room to manoeuvre that the representatives on the platform had. Issues outside the latitude of acceptance of the formal perspective, such as the future of intensive farming in the Drentsche Aa area, were not open to debate (Figure 3).

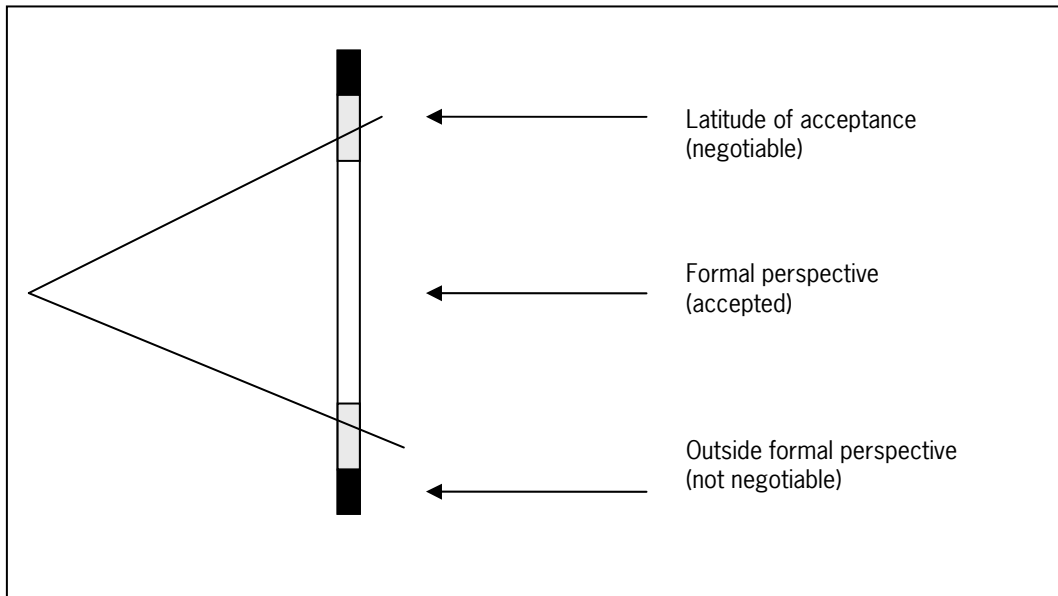


Figure 2 The formal policy perspective and its latitude of acceptance

¹⁸ The rare vegetation types that the National Forestry Service aims to create require very high water tables. The land consolidation process that took place in the Drentsche Aa area in the 1970s led to the construction of many drainage canals and other measures to minimise the risk of flooding and to get rid of excess water as fast as possible. Hence, restoration of high water tables is a necessary precondition for nature conservation. Flooding of arable fields is disastrous for crops such as potatoes, so by denying permits for drainage or other new farm developments, the provincial authorities can make it impossible for professional intensive farmers to stay in such an area.

However, some representatives still needed to be convinced that it was in their own best interest to accept the limits set by the latitude of acceptance of the formal perspective. The 'breakthrough' occurred in 2005, when the conflict between the conservationists and the farmers threatened to stall the process. The way in which the representatives defended their interests did not contribute to the efficiency that the chairman of the Deliberation Committee was looking for in the multi-actor governance process:

'The farmers' representative has a one-track view here. His attitude has antagonized other people on several occasions. I am going to tell him that he should reconsider whether he is the right person to represent the agricultural sector on this platform and if we want to continue like this..... But what applies to the farmers also applies to the conservationists. Nature conservation in the Drentsche Aa area needs a better image. Multi-actor negotiation requires conservation experts to have certain qualities. I do not see much of those qualities in the conservation experts and that worries me. They need to change their role. I have therefore asked the National Forestry Service to take their current representative out of the Committee.' (Chairman interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006)

When the process seemed in danger of becoming stuck, the chairman 'convinced' the representatives by giving them the choice between adhering to the rules of the game or being replaced. The chairman acknowledged that the present representatives of the farmers and the National Forestry Service did not have the process skills that he was looking for in the representatives.

On 4 December 2002, the BIO Plan was accepted and the then Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries, Cees Veerman, officially opened the area and named it the 'Drentsche Aa National Brook and Village Landscape'. The area again had a double status. In November 2001, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment had provided it with the status of 'Provincial Landscape' in its 'Fifth Policy Document on National Spatial Planning', while in January 2002, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Fisheries gave it the status of a 'National Park – new style' in its 'Second Spatial Plan for the Rural Area'. The National Park did not, and still does not include the southern part of the catchment – with the tributaries and small streams that finally form the river Aa. The N367 and N33 motorways form the arbitrary southern boundary. This southern part was included in the Provincial Landscape, which is virtually a copy of the (former) WCL area. The implementation of the BIO Plan is guided by the Consultation Committee (*Overlegorgaan* in Dutch), which has mostly an administrative function.

An analysis of the process of formulating the BIO Plan shows that, from the start, there was little room to manoeuvre for the members of the Preparatory Committee. The formal policy perspective was dominant, and as this perspective was more or less in line with the views of the BOKD (the association representing the interest of small villages) they seem to have had a lot of influence on the BIO Plan. By contrast, the views of the farmers' representatives were further removed from the formal perspective, and they seem to have had relatively little influence on the outcome of the policy process.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the various practices that citizens at the representative level engage in when confronted with the invitation to become involved in nature and landscape policy.

As regards the regional policy practice, we can conclude that the Regional Advisory Committee as well as the Preparatory Committee involved citizens as representatives – the farmers' union and the BOKD (the association representing the interests of small villages) – in addition to traditional policy actors such as the Drenthe provincial authorities, the municipal authorities of the town of Assen and the Ministry of Agriculture. Policy measures originated in close consultation with representatives of the organisations involved.

When the negotiations to formulate the BIO Plan started at the end of the 1990s, the citizens' representatives joined the process. In the early stages, the roles of the various actors were unclear and still had to be negotiated. The input of the citizens' representatives reflected the views of the constituencies that they represented. They became actively involved in the policy process to find a solution to the problem that the Ministry wanted to declare the area a National Park. They perceived this as an issue that would affect them and their constituencies and they therefore wanted to have a say in the matter. They wanted to think along with policy makers and share responsibility for finding solutions to what they perceived to be problems or potential problems. In the beginning, the participants decided that 'being based on existing policy plans' (which their ministerial brief required) did not mean that their ideas had to fully comply with the existing policy. Soon afterwards, the rules of the game were renegotiated. It was decided to take the existing policy as a framework for the negotiations. Among the citizens' representatives, the BOKD representative was quite influential in defining the framework as well as negotiating his position within it. The farmers' representatives were influential in the discussions but their arguments did not have much influence on the outcome of the policy process. The farmers' representatives represented modern farming interests, which put them in a difficult position, as modern (i.e. intensive) farming fell outside the latitude of acceptance of the formal policy perspective and was therefore not negotiable. The farmers' representatives responded by fiercely defending their position in order to try to get as much out of the negotiations as possible. They responded by taking up entrenched positions, but their demands were too far removed from those of the other participants. For some time, the formal negotiations among representatives of actors amounted to little more than fighting for a slice of the cake, i.e., bargaining without wanting to compromise.

When the process threatened to become stalled, the chairman of the multi-actor platform intervened. He threatened to replace the farmers' representatives with more moderate individuals from the farming community – e.g. farmers open to more extensive methods of farming – if they continued to 'frustrate' the process. This is how the chairman 'convinced' the farmers' representatives that it was in their own best interest to change their negotiation strategy. He advised them to adopt a more moderate strategy instead, with demands that were within the latitude of acceptance of the formal perspective (and therefore negotiable) even if such a position did not fully 'match' their constituencies' interests.

4 Involvement of constituencies in the Drentsche Aa area

The previous chapter discussed how citizens were involved in the formulation of the BIO Plan by means of a system of representation. In this regional level negotiation process, the farmers' representatives (NLTO) and the representative of the interests of small villages (BOKD) had accepted compromises without knowing for sure whether these would be accepted by their constituencies. As we will show in this chapter, these compromises did not always match the views of their local level constituencies. To keep their constituencies 'on board' and to ensure their support, the representatives regularly communicated the policies and agreements to the constituencies in several information and discussion evenings. There were clear and specific invitations for citizens at the constituency level to become involved in nature and landscape policy. This chapter investigates the involvement of citizens during the formulation as well as the implementation of the BIO Plan. We will discuss the various practices that citizens from constituencies engaged in when confronted with the invitation to become involved in regional nature and landscape policy and the influence they had on the policy process. To this end, we take people's everyday practices, i.e. 'what people do', and their motivation for this as a point of departure.

4.1 Formulation of the BIO Plan

4.1.1 Information meetings

During the process of formulating the BIO Plan, attempts were made to actively involve the constituencies and thereby convince them of the work that the Preparatory Committee was doing. Several information evenings and discussion evenings were organised to inform residents about the plans. In addition to information meetings for farmers organised by NLTO, the BOKD organised two information evenings for villagers. The municipal authorities of the town of Assen also organised an information meeting for people from the Anreep region.

During these information and discussion evenings, residents of the region and farmers could ask questions and take a look at the (mostly final) plans. After the formulation of the BIO Plan, these information evenings were continued and re-named 'thematic evenings' because they concerned specific aspects of the management or policy of the Drentsche Aa area, e.g. management by the National Forestry Service.

In addition to this, the National Landscape officials organised so-called 'villagers' days¹⁹. Villagers from the Drentsche Aa region could take part in various activities, such as coach excursions through the Drentsche Aa area. These excursions were led by National Landscape officials or officials from organisations represented in the Consultation Committee. During the excursions, information was presented to the participants about specific projects, about the landscape and about nature and landscape policy. The coach would stop at several places and the participants were taken on a walk through the area to show them specific projects.

¹⁹ Villagers' Days: 'Bewonersdagen': days in which village residents from the Drentsche Aa region could participate in things like coach excursions through the area

Last but not least, the National Landscape officials published a newsletter called 'Doorstroom' which was distributed among the residents of the region. The newsletter was published three times a year and provided information about projects in the Drentsche Aa area and plans for the area. A summary of the newsletter was published in local newspapers.

The following subsections give an overview of the responses of citizens to these invitations.

4.1.2 Leaving responsibility to others

Although the National Landscape officials encouraged citizens to become actively involved in nature and landscape policy by joining the discussion and attending information evenings, not all citizens did actually attend these meetings. Some citizens were simply satisfied with the situation. They expressed their involvement indirectly through voting and trusted their representatives to manage the situation for them. The following excerpt from an interview transcript reflects this.

Interviewer: What difference does it make for you as a villager to live in a National Landscape now?

Respondent: Not much. Nothing's really changed. Everything's pretty much the same as always.

Interviewer: I heard that the National Landscape sometimes organises discussion evenings....

Respondent: Yes that's right. We've received information about that. I've never been there myself but I heard that they generate ideas there.... I don't know what happens to those ideas.... I'd wanted to go, but there are other things that take time and demand attention too and then you just have to make choices. (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 22 September 2005)

To some villagers, being involved in nature and landscape policy just was not a priority. Being involved in nature and landscape policy takes time and effort, and they were perfectly happy to leave this responsibility to others. So regardless of specific efforts to involve villagers, many of them were not willing to become involved.

4.1.3 Lack of identification with the National Landscape

There were also citizens who did not attend the discussion evenings because they did not identify with the National Landscape.

"The National Landscape? Eeuuhh.... Oh yes, that's about the Drentsche Aa area right? It's not about our village, it's about the whole Drentsche Aa area, I think. It is very general and abstract, you know? I always have to think what the National Landscape was about again..." (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 23 September 2005)

When asked about the National Landscape, many respondents first had to think hard what this was about. For the villagers in the Drentsche Aa region, the National Landscape and its BIO Plan did not really capture their imagination. Although the BIO Plan (and its follow-ups) proposed major planning changes for the Drentsche Aa region, the villagers failed to identify with the National Landscape. This would not be so surprising if the National Landscape was something outside the villages and therefore beyond the immediate interests of the villagers. However, the situation for the Drentsche Aa was different. The village territory, based on the

traditional Marken system, was an important part of the National Landscape. The 'Marken' were age-old local governance systems that not only managed the local common properties, but also formed a system of local farmer self-government (Elerie, 2003). As agriculture was traditionally integrated with the rural community, the Marken system also reflected village cohesion. In the Drentsche Aa landscape, the old 'Marken' boundaries can often still be seen. And the social structures of the villages are also a reflection of the Marken system, for instance in the way local networks – such as schools or the village council - are organised. The traditional boundaries of the village territory are part of the collective memory of its residents. Even today, newcomers soon know the boundaries of their village territory (see Elerie, 2003). However, the concept of the National Landscape lacked such meaning. Since it failed to take into account the way in which villagers construct their responsibilities in relation to nature and the landscape (on the basis of village territories), many villagers did not identify with the National Landscape and were therefore not very motivated to become involved in the policy process.

Although the villagers are proud of the area, they did not share the concerns of the Preparatory Committee to conserve the unique landscape, natural beauty and biodiversity of the Drentsche Aa area as one of the last relatively unspoilt river systems on the North German Plain. A villager told us:

'The people from the National Landscape see this as a nature reserve, but then a nature reserve with historic villages in it. We don't share that perception. Nature and the village are just there. We were born here and we live here, so it's normal to us. My neighbour, he's passed away now, never went for a walk even when the sun was shining. He would reply "Go for a walk? Are you crazy? Beautiful here? I don't think so!" The people that live here don't see it. We just want a village that's pleasant to live in.' (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 10 August 2005)

Not all villagers shared the National Landscape officials' perception that the Drentsche Aa area is a 'nature reserve with historic villages in it'. To some of the villagers, their landscape was not special, unique or precious at all. They therefore did not share the concerns of the Preparatory Committee with regard to the need for the conservation of the landscape.

Another villager said:

'When I open my front door and when I see the cows in those meadows full of soft rush²⁰, I say to myself "wow, what a beautiful view". But this biodiversity that everybody is worried about... I don't think I really see the biodiversity that they're talking about. Down the road you have meadows that are full of orchids in spring. People come here from all over the country to stare at the orchids, but orchids are just weeds here. Tourists are shocked, when I play "fetch" with my dog and I throw a tennis ball into those meadows. But what's so special? There are millions of them.' (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 23 September 2005)

This quote shows that even villagers who appreciated the landscape that they lived in, did not always share the Preparatory Committee's view that nature is vulnerable and should therefore be protected. In their experience, nature is not vulnerable at all, because it is all around them and the rare plant species are present every year in large numbers. One and the same reality was thus interpreted in different ways and had different meanings.

²⁰ Soft rush: *Juncus effusus*

'I feel that this whole National Landscape talk is just a lot of governmental nonsense.' (Villager from Anderen, interviewed in Anderen on 10 October 2005)

This shows that many villagers felt that the National Landscape and the BIO Plan were no more than fancy managerial concepts that were imposed upon the region. The National Landscape was part of the 'policy business' that did not interest or concern them and that they could not identify with. They did not share the view that there was a problem at all or that action should be taken.

4.1.4 Disillusioned by participation

In the perception of some villagers, the BIO Plan had serious consequences for the village and/or its territory. These villagers, for example those from Anderen, a village with a strong agricultural identity, had clear opinions about the BIO Plan. Where the BIO Plan envisaged a sustainable form of agriculture within the spatial conditions of the National Landscape, most of the remaining farmers in Anderen found it hard to imagine themselves engaged in such a form of agriculture. Therefore, about half of the farmers expected to terminate their farming practices in the short term. Villagers in Anderen were afraid that when the farmers left, their land would be turned into conservation areas, and the villagers did not want this to happen as it would 'destroy' the identity of their village. Therefore, the villagers formed a coalition with the farmers (see BOKD, 2005¹).

'They are chasing away all the farmers in the village. If all farmers leave, we will end up with a whole Drentsche Aa area full of National Forestry Service land. Everything will be the same. I don't mind nature but I don't want everything to become nature. We need and want the farmers to stay in our village.' (Villager of Anderen interviewed in Anderen on 10 October 2005)

The villagers were proud of their agricultural landscape, which in their view could only be conserved if there were sufficient farmers in the village in the future to manage it. The villagers were also afraid of what would happen if the remaining farmers disappeared. They did not want current agricultural land to become nature reserves. To the villagers, it was uncertain if enough farmers would have a future in Anderen if the BIO Plan was implemented.

A second example was provided by a villager from Gasteren. Gasteren has changed from an agricultural village into a residential village, housing mainly commuters. Gasteren is surrounded by conservation areas, and there are virtually no farmers left in the village. These villagers also resisted the BIO Plan, which intended to develop Gasteren and its surroundings into a core area for hiking and cycling.

'I live here because of the peace and quiet of the Drentsche Aa area. I just love it. But I don't want all those tourists to come here. It's getting more and more crowded. If the weather's nice, we have a traffic jam here in our village because of all the tourists. We like to go for a walk but nowadays we try to avoid going for a walk on Sundays. It's just too busy. The National Landscape officials are promoting tourism. Not so long ago, they even published an article in Libelle [a national women's magazine]. They want to have more visitors, but we don't share their ambitions.' (Villager of Gasteren interviewed in Gasteren on 11 October 2005)

The most salient problem expressed by these villagers was the pressure of recreation on their village (BOKD, 2005³). Most of the area around village is part of the Dutch National Ecological Network and is owned by the National Forestry Service, and the area surrounding the village is very attractive to tourists. Villagers perceived this as their village becoming increasingly

crowded. The villagers were very sceptical about the National Landscape plans, because they feared that increased recreation would adversely affect the liveability of the village.

Some villagers expressed a clear interest in becoming involved in nature and landscape policy, because it allowed them to hold decision makers accountable. They wanted to think along with Preparatory Committee and take responsibility for improving the BIO Plan in terms of what they perceived as its most important shortcomings. However, being involved in regional policy often became a disillusion to them.

'They planned an access point [for the national landscape area] here, just as they have at Taarlo. As a village, we don't want this access point here at all. And if they want an access point here anyway, we want it to be in the middle of the village, not on the other side of the highway. That just won't work. We asked them "what if the whole village opposed this plan? Will you then change it?" They told us that they might then reconsider it. We felt that they had just pushed it through. If everything has already been decided, what are we talking about then? Involvement came too late to be of use.' (Villager from Anloo interviewed in Anloo on 10 August 2005)

'[During the formulation of the BIO Plan] the Government went into the area and they organised sessions to which we were all invited. They allowed everybody to have their say. They wrote everything down that was said. The problem is that they already knew where they wanted to go. They decided whose views they wanted to take into account. At a certain point, the BIO Plan was published and everything was completely reframed to fit in with their own aims and goals.' (Villager from Grolloo, interviewed in Grolloo on 22 September 2005)

'During one of the first discussion meetings, which I attended, a provincial official told me "whether the Drentsche Aa area will be called a National Park or not, we will just implement our policy plans anyway". That's what he told me straight to my face. He was honest, but I've always kept this in the back of my mind. The provincial authorities have put a certain claim on this area, whatever we say or do.' (Villager from Tynaarlo, interviewed in Tynaarlo on 11 Augustus 2005)

Villagers throughout the region shared the view that the 'government' (in this case the Consultation Committee) did not intend to share responsibilities with them. They were allowed to have a say in the matter, but it remained up to the decision makers whether or not their opinions would be taken into account. This gave them the feeling that they were not being respected and that their input was not taken seriously. Within the formal policy framework, the Preparatory Committee was in charge of defining what was desirable for the Drentsche Aa region. Problems arose because villagers had different interpretations. Villagers' inputs were not taken into account because they were meaningless within the policy framework of the Preparatory Committee.

'On the part of the government, because that's where these plans obviously come from, they want to involve the people to have a so-called "say in the matter". Everyone in the village is very doubtful about this. What are we talking about? About hot air! It is all fake.' (Villager from Tynaarlo, interviewed in Tynaarlo on 11 Augustus 2005)

'The BIO Plan is related to the National Landscape. It says – I think it's chapter 7 – that inhabitants have to be involved. But they've already decided everything. I attended the first discussion meeting and I didn't like it from the start. I deeply mistrust their intentions. I still need proof that they really listen to what we say.' (Villager from Deurze, interviewed in Deurze on 22 September 2005)

Villagers therefore lost trust in the Consultation Committee and became sceptical about the whole process. Although some of the villagers were involved in nature and landscape policy, they were not able to get their problem perceptions on the policy agenda. They were confronted with targets that had been set at a higher level without their input and consequently they were asked to change their ways of doing things and to take responsibility for meeting these targets. As a result, local people no longer believed that the National Landscape had anything to offer. The disillusionment with respect to participation that we have documented here led to the emergence of new responses by citizens, to which we will turn our attention now.

4.1.5 Active non-participation

Some villagers, although initially interested in the National Landscape, responded to the perceived top-down policy process with passive resistance. They did not feel that it was useful to participate in further discussion meetings or other participatory activities. It was discouraging to them to be involved in nature and landscape policy because they did not feel that it led to any concrete and visible results and their time and energy were not appreciated or rewarded.

'The people in the villages are quite sceptical with regard to the National Landscape. The National Landscape officials try to involve them in all kinds of things, but people just don't attend these activities. They say "I could go there, but it's all talk, talk, talk..." They don't participate but they do talk about the National Landscape in the village, in the pub at night.' (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 14 June 2005)

'This question that you ask.... Is the National Landscape on peoples' minds? Yes, I think people are thinking and talking about it. But people just don't go to meetings anymore because if nothing good ever comes out of it, it's better to stay away. If you participate, you are also – at least partly – responsible for the outcome' (Villager from Anderen, interviewed in Anderen on 21 September 2005)

The villagers quoted here were interested in nature and landscape policy but they were disappointed to realise that passivity was in fact the only option open to them.

4.1.6 Actively opposing nature policy plans

Other villagers who were interested in the National Landscape responded to the perceived top-down policy formulation with active resistance. They perceived opposition to be the only option left open to them and took an active stance to oppose the proposed plans.

'If things are about to happen and they're written down on paper, then it is important to be involved as a village. Things happen all around us. If you don't participate as a village then don't blame others if things don't go as expected. What do you want your village to look like in the future? That's the question. If you're given the opportunity to do something, then do it! That's my point of view.' (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 14 June 2005).

This villager felt that she should protect her own interests. By opposing the policy plans, villagers distanced themselves from nature and the landscape. Instead of bridging the gap between villagers and policy, citizen involvement – in this case – reflected a widening gap. Villagers felt increasingly detached from nature and landscape policy.

4.2 Implementation of the BIO Plan

4.2.1 Invited and uninvited involvement

In 2005, the Drentsche Aa area was officially labelled a 'National Landscape'. The BIO Plan and its follow-ups together formed the core of the Implementation Programme²¹ for the National Landscape. The budget for the Implementation Programme was envisaged to be provided under the Rural Planning Act (Wet Inrichting Landelijk Gebied, WILG). Under this act, the Province of Drenthe was to be given 450 million euros for planning and design in the rural areas, to be spent over a seven-year period. The National Landscape is one of the five regions in Drenthe on which this money should be spent.

Actors from within the area could apply for subsidies by proposing projects to the Consultation Committee. This Committee had the power to decide whether or not the proposed projects contributed to the implementation of the BIO Plan and to reject or accept the proposals.

'Let's stop talking and start doing. We have nice plans but now we need people to generate projects. Bring on those ideas! Sometimes we have to shake the tree. We can't change the world by just writing plans and vision papers. So we need people to formulate projects. I'm a kind of director; I try to find those people.' (Chairman of the Consultation Committee interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006)

The Consultation Committee wanted the actors themselves to be active and take responsibility. It saw its own role as helping to open doors that would otherwise have stayed closed. The creative solutions that existed at the local (field) level had to shape the specific implementation of the BIO Plan. The Consultation Committee no longer wanted to dominate the procedure. Instead it wanted to create conditions and provide the means for implementation.

Several projects in the Drentsche Aa region had already been adopted by the Consultation Committee. These projects were all forms of self-organisation set up to implement the BIO Plan. The following subsections discuss some of these projects and their aims.

4.2.2 Local entrepreneurship

Some villagers in the Drentsche Aa region took the National Landscape policies and the BIO Plan as an opportunity to engage in new income-generating activities. Increased tourism, for example, offered opportunities to start small-scale businesses that served the demands of the increased number of visitors:

'I used to have a potato farm. I have now created a forest on my land and started a camping site. The forest is subsidised for the coming 20 or 30 years. The camping site is big enough to be profitable.' (Rural entrepreneur, interviewed in Anderen on 21 June 2005)

In a similar vein, other farmers initiated projects aimed at selling regional products or open up their farms to visitors. The projects were mostly demand-driven and were focused on earning income.

'These activities are only possible for a limited number of people. Just take recreation: some farmers have a small-scale camping site. Another one runs a tractor tram. But we can't all engage in such activities.' (Farmer from Deurze, interviewed in Deurze on 22 September 2005)

²¹ Accepted on 30 May 2006

When the projects proved successful, other people followed, and soon some of them were confronted with the limited size of the area. The area could only sustain a limited number of these activities and were not an option for all.

Some farmers redesigned their methods in such a way that they fitted in with the policy frameworks, and complied with regional nature and landscape policy in creative ways. For example, local farmers entered into tenure arrangements with the National Forestry Service to meet the criteria of the manure act.

'Dairy farmers like to be tenants of the National Forestry Service because if you're a tenant you can use that land to compensate for the manure that you produce on your farm. According to the manure act, you are allowed to own three cows per ha. You can also use the land under tenure contracts for your manure bookkeeping. The National Forestry Service land just gives you more bookkeeping freedom.' (Farmer from Grolloo, interviewed in Grolloo on 22 September 2005)

These examples show that villagers and farmers found very creative ways of using the existing rules and regulations to their advantage. They changed or redefined their practices to make them fit in with existing policy plans and procedures while at the same time generating income.

4.2.3 The Village Landscape Plans

The BOKD offered the villagers an opportunity to formulate so-called Village Landscape Plans. These plans included a planning design for the village and its immediate surroundings. This design represented the local agenda of the villagers themselves and was therefore a powerful document for the villagers to use in negotiations with other actors, such as the municipal and provincial authorities or the Consultation Committee. The villagers used the Village Landscape Plans to challenge the self-proclaimed authority and reputation of the Consultation Committee and thereby protected their own interests.

'The Village Landscape Plan was formulated in response to the BIO Plan. The BIO Plan concerns the whole area so it concerns us as well. This is our answer to the BIO Plan.' (Villager from Anloo, interviewed in Anloo on 14 June 2005).

The Village Landscape Plans were formulated by working groups of villagers that represented different village interests, such as the rural women's society²², the local historical association, the school, the village council, the boermarke²³ etc. The first phase of the development process involved the question how villagers viewed their village and its surrounding area. This question was addressed by means of participatory methods. For example, villagers were asked to take photographs that characterised their village and photographs that did not. 'Living-room meetings' were organised in which villagers were asked to bring an object (not a photo) that symbolised their relation with the village and its landscape. The results of these participatory initiatives were integrated to create an overview which reflected the similarities and differences in the ways that the villagers perceived the landscape and viewed the identity of their village. The integrated overviews were presented to the villagers at special meetings, where they could react to them.

²² Rural women's association: 'Plattelandsvrouwen'

²³ Boermarke: the traditional local self-governance community of villages in Drenthe

The second phase of the design of the Village Landscape Plans started with a formulation of Local Agendas. A Local Agenda represented the villagers' positions with regard to existing nature and landscape policy, focusing on the National Landscape policy. In each village, each member of the working group was given a copy of the BIO Plan in preparation of a 'discussion meeting', during which policy makers were asked to outline existing policy as it affected or would affect the village and its immediate surroundings. Villagers were able to discuss the policy plans with the policy makers.

In the third phase of the design of the Village Landscape Plans, the Local Agendas produced by the villagers were confronted with the views that the policy makers had presented. This confrontation made policy makers aware of the support (or lack of it) that existed among villagers for their policy plans. This also provided the villagers with a clear overview of the similarities and differences between their Local Agenda and the existing policies for their village. It made villagers aware of the steps that needed to be taken for their Local Agenda to be implemented. This included lobbying with regard to those aspects that were not supported by existing policy. Each Village Landscape Plan included a list of practical projects, some of which needed to be carried out on a short-term basis, whereas others could be carried out in the longer term. The influence of some of these projects can already be seen, e.g. in the 'Rolderdiep' project. The Village Landscape Plans represent an example of local practices that try to renegotiate existing policy.

The Village Landscape Plans were decentralised policy practices, in which villagers decided what direction to follow and how to organise this. The Village Landscape Plans were adopted by the National Landscape management and labelled local initiatives for the implementation of the BIO Plan, even if they did not completely fit in with the objectives of the BIO Plan. After the Village Landscape Plans had been printed, they were officially presented to the Chairman of the Consultation Committee.

4.2.4 The Amerdiep project

Another case in which policy frameworks were renegotiated through people's practices is the 'Farmers for Nature' project in the Amerdiep area. 'Farmers for nature' presents itself as an alternative to the current highly intensive bulk farming, experimenting with payments for countryside stewardship activities (known as 'green' or 'blue' services in Dutch, as they relate to nature conservation or water management) (LTO and Alterra, 2005).

The idea for the 'Farmers for Nature' project came up when the Plot Exchange Committee was confronted with a situation in the Amerdiep area (880 ha. owned by 24 farmers), in which fairly large plots of agricultural land came up for sale. This land could not be bought by the National Forestry Service (not even by means of exchanging plots) because the Regional Zoning Plan had not assigned to it the (future) status of 'nature conservation area'. Because of the low agricultural value of the plots, the land along the Amerdiep brook was not interesting for other farmers either. The Plot Exchange Committee proposed to look for options in which farming could be combined with nature conservation. The farmers agreed. The Plot Exchange Committee then took this idea to the Drenthe provincial authorities, which (through the Consultation Committee) agreed to take on the Amerdiep project as an experiment. They asked Alterra – a large research institute – to carry out research in the area and to design farming models that would combine farming with nature conservation (see Corporaal, *et al.*, 2003). Within the 'Farmers for Nature' project, the farmers formulated a management plan for 250 hectares of land in the Amerdiep area. Some farmers decided to invest in habitat creation. They were prepared to buy the land which became available at a reasonable price.

'In terms of business, farming in an extensive manner appeals to me.... An integrated farm at this location offers me the best chances of a reasonable income.' (Dairy farmer from Grolloo, taken from NLTO and Alterra 2005)

A number of farmers were prepared to make room for habitat development in the Amerdiep brook valley:

'If I can get a decent price, I would like to sell the remote fields and so make room for nature. There is some interest within the group in this.' (Dairy farmer from Ekehaar, taken from NLTO and Alterra 2005).

This created opportunities for exchanging plots and selling land, whereby the ecologically valuable areas, that is, areas where agriculture is not profitable, would become available. In compensation for the investment made by the participants, the financial risks taken and the land-related and management costs, an annual compensation of 1300 euros per hectare per year was necessary. Farmers wanted a guarantee that these subsidies would be available for a period of at least 30 years.

'If there's a guarantee for long-term management compensation, participation through management is also conceivable. In order to do this, just like the National Forestry Service, we should also be given long-term guarantees for the development of nature conservation areas.' (Dairy farmer from Ekehaar, taken from NLTO and Alterra 2005)

This long-term prospect allowed farmers to make the investments needed to adapt their farms to this new kind of farming.

'I'm prepared to invest in a farm with nurse cows, in which the agriculture is subservient to nature, landscape and water. However, I am a businessman, and I require security over a long period of time for all of my major investments.' (Arable farmer from Amen, taken from NLTO and Alterra, 2005)

The 'Farmers for Nature' project resulted in a management plan formulated by farmers with the aim of reserving and maintaining 10% of the area's landscape elements and high-biodiversity grasslands (i.e. those at the edges of the brook valley). In return for compensation, this land would be withdrawn from agriculture. Compensation was also required for planning and management. In addition to the annual costs, one-time investments were also required to realise this plan (LTO and Alterra, 2005). When the project became a success, it was adopted by the Consultation Committee:

'A unique process has started in the Amerdiep area, to which we, as ambassadors, are happy to lend our support. It is unique in the sense that we are looking for new opportunities here, opportunities which are present partially outside of the existing set of tools. It is above all unique because the farmers here are taking the lead and challenging government and other partners in the area to collaborate and push the limits.' (Chairman of the Consultation Committee interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006).

When farmers decided to engage in habitat creation along the Amerdiep brook, the Regional Zoning Plan had not yet assigned it the potential future status of 'nature conservation'. Therefore, the Plan had to be adapted to allow for the project. The chairman of the Consultation Committee explains that, in this case, this was not seen as problematic.

'Plans have to fit within the existing institutional boundaries. But if we want something and we run into these boundaries, then we consult with the provincial authorities and ask them what to do about it. We have a clear vision and if people come up with great ideas for its implementation then existing policy should not be the problem.' (Chairman of the Consultation Committee interviewed in Groningen on 6 December 2006)

Thus, presenting the 'Farmers for Nature' project as an experiment that offered opportunities for the implementation of the BIO Plan and its follow-ups allowed redefinition of the Regional Zoning Plan to be easily legitimised.

In the 'Farmers for Nature' project, citizen involvement resulted in an (unintended) renegotiation of existing policy. Farmers tried to protect their interests in very active ways, making use of the formal process. They reformulated what was meaningful to them in such a way that it became meaningful within the formal perspective. They tried to put forward interpretations of situations in such a way that they could benefit from advantages (e.g. subsidies in the 'Farmers for Nature' case).

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the various practices that citizens at the constituency level engaged in when confronted with the invitation to become involved in the nature and landscape policy process.

Regional multi-actor governance practices in the Drentsche Aa area led to very specific forms of involvement of local people (citizens) in nature and landscape policy. By creating conditions and providing resources, the Consultation Committee wanted the actors from the region themselves to be entrepreneurs and take responsibility for the implementation of the BIO Plan. Villagers responded in different ways. Some citizens did not see the need to become involved in nature and landscape policy and refrained from engaging in practices to express their involvement. Others saw the BIO Plan as an impairment and became involved because of this. They tried to engage in practices to oppose the proposed nature and landscape policy. A third group saw the BIO Plan as an opportunity and tried to find ways to benefit from it.

We have documented three reasons for not participating. Some villagers were happy with the situation. They just did not share the view that there was a problem at all or that action should be taken. To them, being involved in nature and landscape policy just was not a priority. They were able to refrain from being involved because there was no reward for participating, nor any consequence of not participating. A second reason for not participating was that some villagers they felt that their preferences were adequately expressed through voting. A third reason was that some villagers were indifferent to the situation because they did not identify with the National Landscape. These villagers had a completely different interpretative framework than the Consultation Committee. Villagers felt that the National Landscape and the BIO Plan were no more than fancy managerial concepts that were imposed on the region. To these villagers, the National Landscape was part of the 'policy business' that they were not interested in and that did not concern them. This means that specific groups of villagers excluded themselves from involvement.

A second group of villagers wanted to be involved, think along with the Consultation Committee and share responsibility for finding solutions to what they perceived as problems caused by the regional policy. The situation that the villagers desired did not match the situation intended by the decision makers. These villagers had a clear interest in being

involved in nature and landscape policy, because they wanted to hold decision makers accountable. However, it became clear that the interpretative framework of the decision makers was dominant over that of the villagers. As a result, some villagers no longer believed that the National Landscape had anything to offer. They responded to the perceived top-down policy formulation with active non-participation. The feeling of losing control, of not having any influence or disagreeing with the way things were going made people withdraw. Others, who perceived their chances of success differently, responded by fighting for their interests. They moved to protect their own interests, and by empowering themselves they started to 'fight' the regional plans. By opposing the policy plans, villagers distanced themselves from nature and landscape policy. Instead of bridging the gap between citizens and policy, villagers' involvement widened the gap. Villagers felt increasingly detached from (regional) nature and landscape policy.

A third group of villagers decided to become engaged in the National Landscape process in creative ways. Some took regional nature conservation policy as an opportunity to engage in new income-generating activities. These practices were mostly demand-driven and were focused on earning income. When the practices were successful, other people soon followed. Others re-defined their existing practices in such a way that they could fit in with the policy frameworks. In the case of the Amerdiep project, people's involvement sometimes even resulted in (unintended) renegotiations of existing policy. However, this could not have happened without assistance from the BOKD and Alterra, respectively. Nature and landscape policy is not easily understood by most villagers, which means that they are in an unfavourable position. The extent to which people are able to protect personal interests depends on whether they know and understand the rules and regulations, have the skills to operate and communicate within this perspective or have the resources to attract specialists and advisers. As many villagers lack the necessary knowledge, skills and resources, many are in effect excluded from involvement.

5 The construction of citizenship in the Drentsche Aa area

Contemporary debates about shifts in governance raise the prospect of new forms of citizen involvement and citizenship. Many claims have been made about the need for, and ways to promote citizen involvement. Participatory initiatives involve specific ideas of what it means to be a citizen and therefore in fact determine the ways in which people are allowed to express their involvement. Participatory meetings enable citizenship to be enacted, and citizens to be 'constructed'. The central question in this chapter is what kinds of citizens were constructed in the various multi-actor processes discussed in the previous chapters. We have identified 7 main categories of citizens, which are empirically based and reflect the different attitudes documented in chapters 3 and 4. It is important to realise, however, that these categories do not represent actual individuals. Our starting point that individuals have multiple identities, attitudes and preferences renders an unambiguous classification of people into these citizen categories impossible.

5.1 The passive citizen

5.1.1 The voting citizen

Examples of this category were found in chapter 4. They are perfectly happy to leave the responsibility of policy making to others. They provide support for this policy by being indirectly involved in nature and landscape policy through democratic voting practices. They give their vote and they trust the system of representative democracy to protect nature and the landscape against major risks. They perceive the Consultation Committee to be part of this representative democracy and trust the Committee to take care of nature and landscape policy and do what is right. They do not want to be directly involved in this policy process themselves. It takes too much time and effort and, more importantly, it does not have any added value for them. This category of citizens is both subject and object of policy and they allow policy to treat them as a uniform category. Citizens are conceived as beneficiaries, consumers and users of services provided by policy (Leach and Scoones, 2005). Supplying information is the only form of participation that is appropriate in this view of citizenship. It is assumed that if citizens (the constituencies) are well informed they will understand and appreciate policy. This approach aims at creating passive citizens (see Van Woerkum *et al.*, 2006).

5.1.2 The indifferent citizen

We have seen examples of this category in chapter 4. The 'indifferent citizens' were the ones for whom the National Landscape was part of the 'policy business' that they were not interested in and that did not concern them. They did not identify with the policy problem or the landscape unit in which the Deliberation Committee was trying to involve them. These citizens included villagers who felt more responsible for their village territory (traditional local governance system) than for the National Landscape area. The area that was now being defined as the National Landscape did not have any (traditional) meaning to these villagers. They did not feel responsible and were not motivated to be involved in the policy process. As long as the National Landscape did not directly affect their everyday practices, these villagers were perfectly happy not to be involved.

Although the 'voting citizen' and the 'indifferent citizen' may both be seen as 'passive citizens', their motivations for not being actively involved were quite different. Whereas the 'voting

citizen' was happy with the situation and trusted the decision makers 'to do what is right', the 'indifferent citizen' did not care about the decision makers and their policy as long as it did not affect them. Their passive stance was motivated by indifference rather than by agreement with the system as it is. Decision makers make no distinction between the 'voting citizen' and the 'indifferent citizen', and they are usually approached in the same way. Importantly, conceiving citizens as passive reinforces the passive attitudes of citizens and hence this citizen category can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

5.2 The stakeholder citizen

Examples of this category are mainly found in chapter 3. 'Stakeholder citizens' generally become involved in nature and landscape policy because they have some kind of issue at stake. This is what makes nature and landscape (and the relevant policy) important to them. They feel that there is a problem and/or that action should be taken. This is why they have a clear interest in being involved in nature and landscape policy. They want to think along with policy makers and share responsibility for finding solutions to what they perceive to be actual or potential problems. 'Good citizens' are involved in the process of policy planning, decision making and implementation. They are involved in multi-actor collaborative learning and negotiation processes to formulate effective and acceptable policy for the perceived problems.

In the Drentsche Aa area, it is the farmers' representatives and the BOKD representative in the Advisory and Preparatory Committees who can be seen as 'stakeholder citizens'. They became actively involved in the policy process to find a solution to the problem that the Ministry wanted to declare the area a National Park. They perceived this as an issue that would affect them and their constituencies and therefore wanted to have a say in the matter. The villagers who attended the discussion evenings during the formulation of the BIO Plan, with the aim of influencing the policy process, can also be considered 'stakeholder citizens'. They too felt that the issue would affect their lives and therefore wanted to think along with the policy makers and wanted the policy makers to take their opinions into account. The fact that the farmers were represented separately shows that even though many village inhabitants were farmers and vice versa, villagers and farmers were seen as separate entities with different stakes.

Conceiving citizens as stakeholders requires policy makers to allow them to influence the policy process. It is a model of the citizen that aims at sharing power with citizens. Although citizens are allowed to have a say in the policy process, conceiving citizens as stakeholders has important limitations. The concept implies a notion of citizens as having a single identity with specific fixed interests, and thereby restricts their possible involvement to representing their stakes. Other ways of engaging in the policy process that do not involve protecting interests but are aimed at collective learning or problem solving are limited in this view.

5.3 The assimilated citizen

We saw this category in chapter 3 in the Regional Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee. In the Drentsche Aa area, the 'assimilated citizens' were citizens who started out as 'stakeholder citizens' but gradually became so much involved in, or assimilated by, the process that they, as it were, 'went native'. The dynamics within the platform became more and more important, at the expense of interest protection and the citizens. For example, in both the Regional Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee, the farmers' representatives were prevented from introducing the issue of conventional farming into the BIO Plan, because conventional farming in the Drentsche Aa area did not fit within the latitude of acceptance of the dominant coalition of actors. This dominant coalition not only created

barriers against farmers' representatives having their views included in the BIO Plan, but also convinced the farmers' representatives that it was in their own best interest to stop fighting the existing policy plans as a framework. This was achieved by leaving the farmers' representatives no choice: they could either accept the dominant view or they would be replaced by other individuals who would.

The assimilated citizen concept requires policy makers to treat citizens as co-producers of policy, as one of them. Citizens and policy makers are seen as having a shared interest in the successful completion of a policy process.

Turning stakeholder citizens into assimilated citizens requires the exercise of, often very subtle, forms of power. The dominant interpretative framework is projected to be the only natural, rational, reasonable and meaningful one, and the desire to be involved makes citizens accept it and become assimilated. Although this implies that values and interests shift, it this does not necessarily involve overt conflict or inappropriate manipulation. When values and interests change in interaction, this could also be the result of a learning process. The consequence of this is that the definitions of reality within constituencies come to differ considerably from the definitions used by their 'representatives' within the policy network.

5.4 The antagonistic citizen

In the Drentsche Aa area, 'antagonistic citizens' were citizens who wanted to be involved as stakeholders but found that they had different views than the decision makers, the assimilated citizens and the stakeholder citizens who were members of the Preparatory Committee. Even though they might be allowed to express their views in discussion meetings, it was uncertain whether or not these views would be taken into account. They did not feel respected or represented because what was meaningful to them was not part of the formal perspective. Meaningful participation was no longer possible and this resulted in active (entrenched citizens) and passive (disillusioned citizens) resistance to policy.

The nature of the antagonistic citizen requires policy makers to treat them as adversaries that have to be convinced of the necessity or the benefits of the policies. However, attempts to bridge the gap between policy and these citizens by inviting them to become involved may result in the exact opposite. Instead of bridging the divide between citizens and policy, the practices of involvement in the Drentsche Aa case resulted in an increased detachment between villagers and regional nature and landscape policy.

5.5 The disillusioned citizen

These citizens responded to the perceived top-down policy formulation with active non-participation. They felt that it did not matter whether they participated or not: they did not have any influence anyway, so why bother? As a result, the villagers no longer believed that the National Landscape had anything to offer. They lost confidence in the Consultation Committee and became sceptical about the whole process. Lack of success in terms of concrete results of their involvement made these citizens stop participating. In their perception, passivity was the only option left for them and the only way to express their discontent.

5.6 The entrenched citizen

In contrast to the disillusioned citizens, the entrenched citizens did not react with passivity but tried to find different ways to make themselves heard. They felt that they just had to put in

more effort. They perceived opposition to be the only option left open to them. These villagers recognised the difference between their own views and the views of the Consultation Committee and moved to protect their own interests. They took an active stance to fight the proposed plans.

Entrenched citizens hold decision makers accountable for what is going on. They express their dissent by protesting against the plans without being willing or able to compromise. We have observed this in chapter 4 where the farmers' representatives in the Preparatory Committee shifted from a stakeholder role to an opposition role. Their position hardened and an atmosphere was created in which holding on to 'your slice of the pie' became the ultimate goal. They became entrenched in their own positions and this threatened to block the entire process. Negotiation, a strategy open to stakeholder citizens, was no longer an option in the view of entrenched citizens. Entrenched citizens continually tried to frustrate the social changes brought about by the nature and landscape policy. Citizenship thus became a form of social and political practice intended to block and obstruct policy processes.

5.7 The creative citizen

In the Drentsche Aa area, the 'creative citizens' were villagers who treated nature and landscape policy as an opportunity. For example, some villagers decided to comply with regional nature policy because they perceived new opportunities to generate income. The villagers participating in the Village Landscape Plans and the farmers participating in the 'Farmers for Nature' project also treated nature and landscape policy as an opportunity. They creatively looked for ways to engage in nature and landscape policy. At field level, there were all kinds of creative initiatives by which 'creative citizens' expressed their involvement in nature and landscape policy. These creative initiatives emerged through discussion and experimentation among citizens at the local level.

Some groups were more able than others to adapt to or even utilise nature and landscape policy to their advantage and establish a network of advisers that could help them achieve this. Knowledge, skills and resources were required to reframe what was meaningful to the creative citizens in such a way that it became meaningful for policy makers. Citizens who lacked these were excluded.

Creative citizens search for mutual commitment and seek to minimise burdens, maximise benefits and share responsibilities. In the Village Landscape Plans, as well as in the 'Farmers for Nature' project, citizens shared the responsibility of policy implementation with the Consultation Committee. In both projects, citizens accepted certain obligations and were willing to invest time and effort in nature and landscape policy in return for certain benefits: those who participated had privileged access to certain products or services. This was very clear in the case of the individual income-generating activities. Those who engaged in these activities were able to generate income in ways that were in line with the policy plans and thereby offered them a long-term option of making a living in the Drentsche Aa area. This also applied to the farmers who participated in the 'Farmers for Nature' project, who had also found a way to continue farming profitably in the Drentsche Aa area.

Instead of being merely objects or subjects of policy, creative citizens find ways to co-design policies, their futures and the future of the landscape. These creative, and unpredictable, practices ensure that new forms of citizenship emerge that fit in well with the current trend of increased governance in which citizens are actively involved. However, this involvement will be contingent, multiple and fragmented as it reflects the unique expressions of citizens' different identities and preferences.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This final chapter tries to answer the research questions. It addresses the relation between our findings and the way in which citizen involvement could be improved in a (multi-actor) governance context.

We started this study from our problem definition and conceptual framework. It was in the context of this conceptual framework that we formulated our central research question, which was divided into four subsidiary research questions. This chapter first systematically answers the first three of these research questions (section 6.1), after which it addresses the fourth question in section 6.2.

6.1 Main findings and conclusions: citizen involvement in environmental governance

This section outlines the main findings of our study and draws some conclusions by systematically answering the first three research questions.

How do citizens express their involvement in nature and landscape policy in the Drentsche Aa area in the Netherlands?

Citizens in the Drentsche Aa area expressed their involvement in nature and landscape policy in various ways. First of all, they became involved at a regional level. Citizens' representatives joined the process of formulating the advisory report by the Regional Advisory Committee and the BIO Plan by the Preparatory Committee.

At a local level, a second group of citizens regarded the BIO Plan as an impairment, and hence attended discussion evenings and information evenings. They tried to oppose nature and landscape policy either by active non-participation or by fighting for their interests.

A third group regarded the BIO Plan as an opportunity and tried to find ways to benefit from it. They engaged in new income-generating activities by which they expressed their involvement.

A fourth group of citizens did not see the need to become involved in nature and landscape policy and refrained from engaging in practices to express their involvement.

What is their influence on the outcome of the policy process?

We can conclude that the Regional Advisory Committee as well the Preparatory Committee involved citizens as representatives – the farmers' union NLTO and the BOKD, an association representing the interests of small villages – in addition to traditional policy actors such as the Drenthe provincial authorities, the Assen municipal council and the Ministry of Agriculture. With regard to the citizens' representatives, the BOKD representative was quite influential in defining the framework as well as negotiating his position within it (although his constituency did not necessarily go through the same negotiation and learning process). The farmers' representatives were not so successful at negotiating their position within the framework. Their interests were too far outside the latitude of acceptance of the dominant formal policy

framework. They initially responded by assuming entrenched positions, but in the long run became 'convinced' that it was in their own best interest to accept or even adopt the framework defined by formal policy.

At a local level, the citizens who attended discussion evenings and information evenings were not given a lot of influence on nature and landscape policy. Their interests were also too far outside the latitude of acceptance of the dominant formal policy framework. Their input could provide influence, but the decision-making power – in terms of whether or not to take this input into account – remained with the Consultation Committee.

Citizens who took the BIO Plan as an opportunity to engage in new activities seemed to have a little more influence. They sometimes managed to renegotiate parts of the formal policy framework (achieving small changes that were close to the latitude of acceptance and therefore extended this latitude of acceptance). The extent to which people are able to protect personal interests depends on the degree to which they know and understand the formal interpretative framework and have skills to operate and communicate within this perspective, or have the ability to involve others who have these skills.

Regional multi-actor governance practices in the Drentsche Aa area led to very specific kinds of involvement by local people (citizens) in nature and landscape policy, which included specific groups of citizens while excluding others. Those who were excluded were not necessarily 'out of the game': some found their own way to get what they want, while others just tried again.

What types of citizens are created in these practices?

Our research has identified five main categories of citizens. The first category is that of the 'passive citizen', which can be subdivided into the subcategories of the 'voting citizen' and the 'indifferent citizen'. Voting citizens provide support for policy by being indirectly involved in nature and landscape policy through democratic practices of voting. Indifferent citizens are those for whom nature and landscape policy is part of the 'policy business' that they are not interested in and that does not concern them. As far as decision makers are concerned, 'voting citizens' and 'indifferent citizens' cannot be distinguished and they are usually approached in the same way. This category of citizens is both subject and object of policy and allows policy to treat it as a uniform category. Citizens are conceived as beneficiaries, consumers and users of services provided by policy.

The second category is that of the 'stakeholder citizen'. 'Stakeholder citizens' are involved in multi-actor collaborative learning and negotiation processes to formulate effective and acceptable policy for the perceived problems. Conceiving citizens as stakeholders requires policy makers to give them influence on the policy process. It is a model of the citizen that aims at sharing power with citizens. This model implies the restrictive view of citizens as having a single identity with specific fixed interests, and thereby restricts their possible ways of becoming involved to represent their stakes. Other ways of engaging in the policy process, which do not involve protecting interests but are aimed at collective learning or problem solving, are limited in this conception.

The third category is that of the 'assimilated citizen'. 'Assimilated citizens' are citizens who started out as 'stakeholder citizens' but gradually became so much involved in, or assimilated by, the process that they, as it were, 'went native'. The notion of assimilated citizens requires policy makers to treat citizens as co-producers of policy, as one of them. Citizens and policy makers are seen as having a shared interest in the successful completion of a policy process.

The fourth category is that of the 'antagonistic citizen'. 'Antagonistic citizens' are citizens who want to be involved as stakeholders but find that they have different views from the decision makers. Even though they may be allowed to express their views in discussion meetings, it is uncertain whether or not these views will be taken into account. They do not feel respected or represented, because what is meaningful to them is not part of the formal perspective. Meaningful participation is no longer possible and this results in active (the entrenched citizen) and passive (the disillusioned citizen) resistance to policy. The notion of the antagonistic citizen requires policy makers to treat them as adversaries who remain to be convinced of the necessity or the benefits of the policies.

The fifth category is that of the 'creative citizen'. 'Creative citizens' search for mutual commitment and seek to minimise burdens, maximise benefits and share responsibilities. Instead of being merely objects or subjects of policy, creative citizens find ways to co-design policies, their futures and the future of the landscape. These creative, and unpredictable, practices cause new forms of citizenship to emerge that fit in well with the current trend of increased governance and in which citizens are actively involved. However, this involvement will be contingent, multiple and fragmented as it emerges in the unique expressions of citizens' different identities and preferences.

6.2 General discussion: understanding governance and citizen involvement

This section addresses the overarching fourth research question of this study:

How can these practices be understood in terms of governance, citizen involvement and citizenship?

What we have seen in our case study is a struggle between, on the one hand, the top-down ambition to create first a national park and later a national landscape in the Drentsche Aa area, and on the other hand the new views about multi-actor governance and the ambitions to involve citizens in policy making. This struggle resulted in particular forms of participatory initiatives. In the Regional Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee, citizens were invited to participate as stakeholders (and in the process some became closely involved and assimilated within the process). In addition, information and discussion evenings were organised to allow their constituencies to have a say.

We conclude that attempts at multi-actor governance were indeed made, but only within the dominant framework. The dominance of the policy makers and the reproduction of the formal perspective at the regional level could imply that the formal perspective was just the 'best' one, if indeed everybody had agreed to it. However, in the committees as well as the discussion evenings, the process of determining what was up for negotiation and what not led to disappointment, disillusionment and resistance. As a result, the fact that certain stakeholders were represented on the platform did not imply that the perceptions of those who were supposed to be represented would indeed be considered. As a consequence, the interpretative frameworks and perceptions of constituencies differed from those of the 'representatives' on the platform. This led to the ironic situation that these attempts at multi-actor governance, instead of closing the gap between policy and citizens, only widened it. Furthermore, these particular attempts at multi-actor governance actually recycled old ideas about public support instead of aiming at active involvement. We have seen in the Preparatory Committee meetings that the views of the farmers' representative were actively resisted

because they were too far removed from the dominant framework. The information and discussion evenings also aimed at creating support through information and did not facilitate or encourage active involvement. In view of this, it is not surprising that when villagers were invited to become involved in policy processes, some of them responded with apathy, resistance and/or manipulation of the existing policy frameworks.

The multi-actor governance initiatives promoted two types of citizenship. First, passive citizens were envisaged to come to the meetings, be informed and feel well represented and happy. Second, stakeholder citizens were envisaged to participate in the committees to represent their interests in a constructive way that would not block the process. This is not what happened, however, and the organisers got more than they had bargained for. In addition to these two expected categories, antagonistic and assimilated forms of citizenship emerged as well, as did the category of 'creative citizens'. In a sense, this final citizen category was actively promoted in the implementation process of the BIO Plan, but the result was a largely unpredictable spectrum of creative citizens who possessed the required knowledge, skills and resources and were able to initiate a large variety of projects. Arguably, it is this type of citizen that fits in best with the ambitions of current Dutch nature policy and of multi-actor governance.

Overall, we can conclude that despite the rhetoric about multi-actor governance and citizen involvement, the policy processes documented here were in fact largely government-led. From the selection of the National Landscape concept to the particular concern with existing policy, and from the formulation of legitimate questions to the rigid timetable, this exercise in citizen involvement was conducted in a top-down manner. Although involving citizens added some value, the ways in which involvement was achieved led to a reproduction of the dominant perspective, rather than to co-production of policies and plans.

Our study also allows some important conclusions about policy analysis regarding multi-actor governance and citizen involvement. First of all, our analysis makes it clear that to examine multi-actor governance we need to move beyond the level of plans and intentions and look into the actual practices in which these plans and intentions materialise (or not). Furthermore, it is necessary not to restrict analysis to the simple observations that citizens were represented on platforms and invited to or present during discussion evenings. It is crucial to extend research to focus not only on what actually happens within the context of these platforms and during these evenings but also on what happens outside these forums in terms of citizen involvement and non-involvement. We need to explore the context-specific and contingent social processes, underlying assumptions and operating principles through which citizens and citizenship are constructed in particular settings.

Our report takes a critical stance towards the actual practices of multi-actor governance initiatives by pointing to the dominance of the formal perspective and the unintended consequences of the initiatives. Rather than viewing these as unfortunate flaws, we feel that, as new initiatives will necessarily be confronted with existing policies, structures and institutions, the emergence of complex mixtures between 'the old' and 'the new' is inevitable in practice. Therefore, rather than trying to undermine innovative and important multi-actor governance initiatives, the intention of this report has been to draw attention to the specific practices in which multi-actor governance is negotiated and by which citizen involvement is expressed, in order to acknowledge, explore and scrutinise their character and, as necessary, open them up to wider debate and inquiry.

This study shows that the reproduction of the formal perspective and problems associated with representation are nearly inevitable when engaging in any kind of governance initiative.

Wagemans (2002) also argues that there is hardly anything that can be done to avoid them. So what can we do to solve these problems? First of all, it is important to realise that the tendency towards self-referentiality is present in multi-actor governance initiatives. Although multi-actor governance initiatives are usually initiated with very good intentions, special efforts are needed to escape this tendency. Secondly, therefore, it is important to realise that negotiating the rules of the game should be an important part of the negotiation process. Thirdly, it is not only important to take constituencies through the same learning process as the representatives, but it is also important to create a 'safe environment' in which citizens can explore their citizenship. This 'safe environment' can be created by focusing the negotiations on shared values, instead of allowing the negotiations to be about conflicting interests. It is important to find out what drives people (what is the motivation behind their arguments? What 'really' makes them tick?). This allows for exploring and perhaps reframing the latitude of acceptance in a way that is meaningful to all actors involved.

The governance ambitions of Dutch nature conservation policy to involve multiple actors in policy processes have led to different practices of involvement. They have led both to the inclusion of specific groups of villagers in formal, invitation-based participatory practices and to the exclusion of other groups of villagers from these practices. While citizenship became formally associated with those who were able to participate, by implication, a non-participating group of citizens also emerged. In this report we have shown that these villagers also enacted their citizenship, though not by responding to invitations to become involved and participate in formal arrangements, but in various other and often creative ways. Therefore, governance initiatives aimed at the inclusion of different actors led to the enactment of various, invited as well as uninvited, types of citizenship.

These observations are very important in relation to current trends in governance. In general, the governance literature has adopted a view of citizenship that emphasises the capacity of citizens to participate and engage in decisions that affect their lives. The challenge is to create the conditions that allow for new forms of citizenship, in which citizens are invited to become involved in nature in landscape policy in more active ways as autonomous creators and bearers of knowledge located in particular practices. What this report makes clear is that governance intentions to involve multiple actors in policy processes result in many different, intended as well as unintended, types of involvement. Citizenship is enacted not only as intended and by means of invitation-based participation, but also in informal, unanticipated and uninvited ways. It is crucial for researchers to address and recognise this broad scope of practices as important, legitimate and meaningful manifestations of involvement and citizenship. For policy makers it is important to realise that the governance ambitions to involve multiple actors in policy processes will lead to intended as well as unintended forms of citizenship that they will have to deal with. Although certain forms of citizenship will be more meaningful to policy makers than others, it is important to realise that all forms of citizenship are legitimate and have to be dealt with.

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