

Academic Consultancy Training

**Creative ideas for a new economic
boost in the Region Bovenlanden van
Aalsmeer**

Final Report



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Abstract

In the area Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer, local stakeholders are looking for new opportunities in the leisure and tourism sector in order to contribute to an economic boost in the region. This report identifies existing problems and proposes new ideas for the region to further develop its tourism and leisure activities, with landscape conservation as a guiding principle. A literature review, stakeholder analysis and seven interviews with stakeholders were conducted to analyze the current situation and to develop new ideas. The results suggest to build a network among all stakeholders and to arrange combined activities for tourists. The report ends with the outline of creative ideas, which could contribute to improve leisure and tourism activities in Aalsmeer.

In de regio Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer zijn lokale stakeholders op zoek naar nieuwe mogelijkheden op het gebied van toerisme en vrijetijdsbesteding. Via deze mogelijkheden willen ze de regio een nieuwe economische impuls geven. In dit rapport worden aanwezige problemen aan het licht gebracht en worden nieuwe ideeën geopperd om in deze regio de activiteiten voor toeristen en dagrecreanten verder te ontwikkelen. Bij het ontwerpen van de aangedragen ideeën, is in het achterhoofd rekening gehouden met het feit dat het karakter van het landschap niet veranderd mag worden. Door middel van een literatuurstudie, een stakeholder analyse en zeven interviews met stakeholders is de huidige situatie geanalyseerd. Aan de hand van de resultaten zijn suggesties gemaakt om een netwerk van alle stakeholders te ontwikkelen en om verschillende (bestaande) activiteiten te combineren en in één pakket aan te bieden. Het rapport sluit af met enkele ideeën die zouden kunnen bijdragen aan de verbetering van toeristische en vrijetijdsactiviteiten in Aalsmeer.

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1. Introduction

“Westeinder Plassen: the best kept secret of the Hollandse Plassen.” This is how some people in the region of Aalsmeer describe the area with its characteristic lake and small islands. The Westeinder Plassen are located near Aalsmeer, a city southwest of Amsterdam, where the lake shapes the landscape of the region in a – for this part of the Netherlands – typical way. Since the 10th century, people living in the area were excavating the region’s peat in order to use it as fuel for their stoves. As a consequence, land was removed and water became a more dominant natural resource. Due to this, people had to reorganize their land use and began around the 17th century to focus agriculturally on breeding. Around 1880, just after a climax in tree breeding, farmers switched to flower breeding. During the same period, the first greenhouses were built and roses as well as lilacs became the main local resources. Currently, after more than a century of flower breeding, breeders are pulling back their enterprises and are looking for new businesses elsewhere in the Netherlands. As a consequence, various local stakeholders of the region are currently looking for new economic opportunities to transit and enrich the local economy. To achieve this goal, many research projects have already been conducted with several plans available for potential sustainable development of Aalsmeer. In 2009, the municipality of Aalsmeer developed its ‘Gebiedsvisie 2020’. In this report, the municipality suggested various new ideas and concepts for the area, in order to develop the region. Shortly afterwards, the economic crisis began, which resulted in a preliminary stop of the further development of these concepts. Local associations, such as Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie (SAWP), continue to look for new ideas to develop tourism and leisure in the region. Therefore, this consultancy team was assigned to launch a research project in order to identify the tourism and leisure potential of the region and to develop new creative ideas that might contribute to this development. Ideas are developed taking nature conservation as a guiding principle into account. As a result of this research, recommendations and suggestions are proposed for further development of leisure and tourism and for the cooperation between stakeholders.

In the next chapter the research problem, the research objective and specified research questions are defined. In Chapter 3, the methodology of this research is described in detail. The literature review and stakeholder analysis are outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 respectively. Chapter 6 contains the analysis of the in-depth interviews of the main stakeholders and the derived recommendations. Chapter 7 presents ideas to develop tourism and leisure in the region. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the report and the last chapter contains recommendations and possible further procedures.

2. Research problem

The main issue in the region Aalsmeer is that local breeders are currently leaving the area and are supposed to have disappeared within the next twenty years. Therefore, local stakeholders are looking for new economic opportunities, especially in the sector of tourism and leisure. It is assumed by Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie (SAWP)¹, that the touristic potential of the region is not exploited sufficiently, since tourists are assumed to generally limit their stays to visiting the regional flower auction, the Historische Tuin (Historical Garden) and doing water sports. All recommendations (Chapter 6 Analysis) and ideas (Chapter 7 Creative ideas), were developed under the premise of not changing the region's current landscape. Derived from these assumptions and premises, the problem statement of this research emerged as follows:

In the region of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer there is a lack of (coordination of existing) activities, services and ideas that, under the premise of landscape conservation, could develop this region into a popular tourist and leisure destination.

Research objective

Identify new opportunities for tourism and leisure activities in the region of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer, with landscape preservation as a guiding principle.

Main research question

What are opportunities for tourism and leisure activities in the region of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer within landscape preservation as a guiding principle?

Sub-research questions

1. Analysis of current situation:
 - 1.1 What kind of leisure and tourism activities exist in the region?
 - 1.2 What are current initiatives to develop tourism and leisure?
 - 1.3 What are the local stakeholders' visions of tourism and leisure in the area?
2. Identification of problems and opportunities:
 - 2.1 What advantages does Aalsmeer, as a tourism destination, have?
 - 2.2 Which tourism and leisure activities or services could increase Aalsmeer's potential as a tourism and leisure destination?
 - 2.3 What problems on the development of sustainable tourism (activities) can be identified in the region?
 - 2.4. What are possible ways to overcome these identified problems?

The team investigated the current situation of the region Bovenlanden of Aalsmeer. Hereby, the team's ambition was to identify current problems which hamper (the development of) tourist activities in the region. The project area, the region Bovenlanden, ranges from the provincial road N201 southwards until the most southern part of the Westeinder Plassen. The Western boundary is

¹ The chairman of the SAWP is the commissioner of this research project.

formed by the Aalsmeerderdijk and the Eastern boundary is the bank of the Westeinder Plassen (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of the project region

3. Methodology

In this chapter the research methods that were applied for this paper to collect the data will briefly be outlined. The chapter is divided into four sections with each section describing one method. The first section is on literature review followed by a brief introduction of the stakeholder analysis. A short explanation of in-depth interviews including an overview of the conducted interviews will be provided. The chapter ends with a description of the on-site visits done by the project team.

3.1 Literature review

In order to frame the paper and enhance the process of creating ideas, a literature review has been conducted. Key subjects for the interviews and categories for the analysis of the interviews were derived from the literature as well. The review embeds the research, its recommendations and the developed ideas on current tourism and leisure developments. The main focus of the literature review is sustainable tourism, the relation between nature and tourism as well as nature conservation policies in this region. This focus was chosen due to the commissioner's request to develop ideas about tourism and leisure while taking into account landscape conservation. Additionally, current plans, like the Gebiedsvisie 2020, and relevant institutional documents (about Ecologische Hoofdstructuur) for the region and the Netherlands were considered. The focus within sustainable tourism is on the economic and natural benefits of developing tourism and policy instruments applicable to balance tourism development and natural as well as cultural conservation. Concerning literature on nature conservation methods the emphasis is on conservation policy in the Netherlands such as the ecological network (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur) where the region Bovenlanden plays a role, but also the potential advantages and disadvantages of recreational activities for nature conservation. The literature review was used in order to analyze and investigate the theoretical background of tourism, leisure and nature conservation.

3.2 Stakeholder analysis

A (local) stakeholder analysis was conducted in order to get an overview of the different stakeholders and their vision on future development in and of the region. Based on this overview, stakeholders that play a relevant role for the research's purpose were determined. These identified stakeholders were investigated and considered as interview partners. Data for the final stakeholder analysis were gathered by analyzing the association's homepages, distributed magazines, leaflets and posters as well as by analyzing the interview with the representative of the association. Since the breeders were not represented by an association, additional information could be found in documents and posters about a project or vision of the future of the region where multiple stakeholders were included.

3.3 In-depth interviews

Using the concept of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1998: 51ff.), six in-depth interviews with different stakeholders - respectively representatives of these stakeholders - were conducted. Additionally, one short written questionnaire was sent to another stakeholder and answered by email (compare overview Table 1). Potential interviewees were identified based on the earlier conducted stakeholder analysis. The interview partners were chosen due to their assumed 'importance and suitability' for the project's purpose - assumed by the consultants. The interviewees were selected taking into account "whose testimony seems to be likely to develop and test emerging

analytic ideas” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 107). Therefore, the interviewees were not chosen according to their statistical representativity but according to their “perspective typicality” (Honer, 1994: 626)², as the project’s aim is to “represent the *research participant’s truth* [italic in original version], [to] describing their life worlds - their situation as they see it” (Ashworth, 1997: 219). All formal interviews were set up as guideline interviews where main questions - derived from the sub research questions - were leading the interviews. These questions were flexibly applied and adopted according to the particular stakeholder in order to focus on and consider each stakeholder’s specific background and expertise about the topics. At the same time, the interviewees were motivated and given space during the interview to give more extensive deliberations and emphasize topics the interviewee considered to be important. The access to the interviewees was facilitated by the team and partly by the commissioner’s professional and personal network. In the latter case the commissioner acted as a gatekeeper. Each interview took between 40 minutes and one hour. The six interviews were recorded and analyzed; categories were derived from the data as well as from the literature. Before the start of each interview, interviewees were informed about the project, the research’s purpose and the usage of the collected data. All interviewees agreed on being recorded and ‘their’ organization or association being named in the report.

Every interview was conducted by two members of the team. The languages during the conversations were either Dutch or English, whereby the team asked - due its international composition and in order to render the interpretation process more efficient (no translation necessary) - to conduct as many interviews in English as possible. Certainly, it has to be considered, if interviews were conducted in English - as a foreign language - that possible language constraints from both the interviewer’s and the interviewees’ side might have shaped the interviewees’ accounts.

Table 1: Overview of conducted interviews

Interview	Stakeholder	Type of interview	Field of interviewee	Interview Language
1	Stichting De Bovenlanden	Oral in-depth interview	Landscape preservation association	Dutch
2	Ons Aller Belang	Oral in-depth interview	Neighborhood association	Dutch
3	Municipality	Oral in-depth interview	Municipality of Aalsmeer	English
4	Amsterdam Marketing	Oral in-depth interview	Marketing company	English
5	Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie (SAWP)	Oral in-depth interview	Cooperation of local marinas	English
6	Breeder	Oral in-depth interview	Lilacs breeder	English
7	Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden (WZW)	Questions answered in writing	Collaboration of water sports companies	English

² In other words, crucial hereby is the specific perspective a stakeholder is assumed to have on a certain topic or issue.

3.4 On-site visits

Several on-site visits were conducted by the team members. These visits included visits by boat to the lake and the small islands in the lake. Furthermore, potential touristic sights, such as the historical garden, the city center and the tourist office were visited. The team used these visits in order to acquire a tourist's perspective on the area. Additionally, the team investigated several local breeding farms where farmers showed and explained their specific way of breeding. These on-site visits were first of all conducted to become familiar with the context of the project area, for instance with the local breeding culture on the small islands and in the greenhouses. Additionally, the visits provided opportunities for the team to engage in informal conversations with locals. These informal conversations were useful to complement the team's image of the area.

4. Literature review

A literature review has been conducted in order to theoretically frame and substantiate the paper, to provide background information, and to provide insights in current development of tourism. Key subjects for the interviews and categories for the analysis of the interviews were derived from the literature as well. The focus of the review lies on two parts: First, sustainable tourism, as this 'new' way of tourism is currently gaining more attention by tourists themselves as well as by suppliers of touristic activities. Furthermore, the commissioner of this project aims to develop long-term and sustainable ways for regional tourism that includes nature conservation as a main principle. Derived from the latter, the second part of the literature review focusses on nature conservation in the Netherlands, with a specific view on the region of Aalsmeer, since large parts of Aalsmeer are part of (nationally) assigned nature conservation areas (such as 'Het Groene Hart', Ecological Network and Groene As).

4.1 Sustainable tourism development

Tourism widely constitutes as a main driving force of economic growth and development (Brida and Risso, 2009). It can provide employment opportunities for local people (Webster and Ivanov, 2014; Liu and Wall, 2006; Chao et al., 2012). As a main form of tourism, nature based tourism has grown steadily in rural or peripheral areas. In the future, it is estimated to develop fast over Europe and elsewhere (Bell et al., 2008; UNWTO, 2012b). However, nature is not an endless source. In many tourism destinations, nature is often regarded as public good that can be depleted by tourism, as a consequence of the intensive use of resources under the requirement of fast-growing tourism activities (Torrent, 2008; Briassoulis, 2002).

As an effective way to address the challenges between developing economy and conserving nature or culture, sustainable tourism and ecotourism became popular. Sustainable tourism can combine the aims of boosting local development, protecting natural environment and conserving cultural or traditional heritage (Castellani and Sala, 2010; Sakellari and Skanavis, 2013). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) provides a specific definition of sustainable tourism as

"tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities" (UNWTO, 2012a: 1).

A more concrete definition by C. Tosun is suggesting that sustainable tourism development can be regarded as

"all kinds of tourism developments that make a notable contribution to or, at least, do not contradict the maintenance of the principles of development in an indefinite time without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs and desires" (Tosun, 1998: 596).

Although sustainable development has been regarded as a crucial factor for tourism development, sustainable tourism policy has limited influence on the tourism market (Holden, 2009). Besides, a successful implementation of sustainable tourism policies in practice is challenging (Tosun, 2001). Tao and Wall (2009) argued that although sustainable tourism has been widely adopted and regulated by international organizations and many governments, it shows both conceptual and practical deficiencies that have frustrated its application. According to the authors, tourism should

serve as a complement rather than a displacement of existing activities of a community. Collins argues that policy instruments should be applied more often to facilitate coordinated strategic planning, rather than simply relying on the market and process coordination (1999). Therefore, high level of coordination of local authorities on tourism activities and a suitable planning of tourism activities based on local conditions are helpful to develop sustainable tourism.

To develop sustainable tourism policies, one more thing needs to be highly concerned: the efficient design for nature based constructs, which include accommodation, activities and relevant services. A research carried out by Tyrväinen provides applicable and useful insights for land use in sustainable tourism development planning. Tyrväinen suggests:

“Density and pattern of building affect the perceived quality of a nature-tourism destination; experiencing nature as part of the accommodation is highly appreciated by tourists; use of sustainable tourism practices needs to be supported by easy choices and well-designed services; the importance of landscape quality calls for an improvement in landscaping practices in tourism destinations” (Tyrväinen et al, 2014: 1).

4.2 Nature conservation for Aalsmeer

It is important to have well-functioning ecosystems as they provide humans with ecosystem services. An ecosystem service represents the benefit the human population receives directly or indirectly from an ecosystem (Costanza et al., 1997). Examples of these ecosystem services are gas regulation, climate regulation, disturbance prevention, nutrient cycling, soil retention, waste treatment, pollination, nursery function, food, raw materials and genetic resources (De Groot et al., 2002). But ecosystems services and goods are also recreation, tourism, spiritual and historic inspiration as well as aesthetic information (De Groot et al., 2002). The monetary worth of all these ecosystem services to society worldwide was estimated to be in the range of 16-54 trillion US dollars per year (Costanza et al., 1997).

Currently, the main threats to biodiversity are habitat loss, fragmentation and alien species (Wilcove et al., 1998; Brooks et al., 2002; Reed, 2004). The loss of species and the decrease of the amount of individuals can have an impact on the structure and function of ecosystems, the significance of the impact depends on the function (Stuart Chapin III et al., 1997). The importance of single species depends on which functional group they belong to. If the group only consists of one or a few species the loss of the species could have a great influence on the processes of ecosystems (Tillman et al., 1997). To protect nature and biodiversity the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Nature Conservation created the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) of which the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN) is one of the main delivery mechanisms. PEEN was created to develop an ecological network at the European level (Jongman et al., 2011). The aim of PEEN is to conserve ecosystems, species, habitats and landscapes in Europe. To accomplish this, the Pan-European Ecological Network consists of core areas, buffer zones and corridors (Jongman et al., 2011). This method of conservation by increasing habitat size and connectivity between the patches is supported by several ecological theories for example the island biogeography theory and meta-population theory (Boitani et al., 2007). But not only the size of single habitat fragments are important, the connectivity between single fragments also affects the survival of species (Crooks and Sanjayan, 2006; Noss, 1991).

In the 1990's, nature policy changed from a conserving perspective to a more developmental approach (Boer et al., 2008). As part of the Pan-European Ecological Network the ecological network of the Netherlands was created, in Dutch Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (EHS). This is an important aspect of nature conservation policy in the Netherlands as through the Ecological Network, the Netherlands want to preserve the Dutch biodiversity (Jagers of Akkerhuis et al., 2005). Also Aalsmeer is part of this planned Ecological Network, as the Bovenlanden is a connection between the

Amsterdamse Bos, Westeinder Plassen and Oosteinderpoel. This connection is also part of the Groene As, which is supposed to connect small and large natural areas between Amsterdam and Spaarnwoude (Leguijt, 2011). In order to ensure that the Bovenlanden region stays part of the ecological network, existing nature has to be maintained and possibly developed further.

Nature is important for recreation and tourism (De Groot et al., 2002). But recreation and tourism can also be important for nature conservation, as recreational and tourism activities could be a way to maintain nature through financial support, increased “pro-conservation attitude” (Tisdell and Wilson, 2001: 233) or by increasing personal actions tourists undertake in order to contribute to nature conservation (ibid³; Jagers of Akkerhuis et al., 2005). An increase in the recreational use in a region can influence the natural and semi-natural resources as was found in a study examining Australian nature (Sun and Walsh, 1998). As possible activities this study included camping and bush walking, which can have impacts on the environment like soil compaction or soil loss, trail formation, litter and water pollution. The impact on nature could be a direct effect from activities like damage to the vegetation but also indirect for example spreading a root rot fungus as was investigated by Pickering and Hill (2007). Therefore, keeping the area open for public is a possible way to attract people as long as the area is properly managed to reduce and counteract the possible damage created by recreational activities.

³ “ibid.” means this source is the same source as last / previous mentioned

5. Stakeholder analysis

To get an overview of the different actors in the region, a stakeholder analysis has been conducted.⁴ The team decided to take into account seven stakeholders, which were assumed to be most important in the project area. The stakeholders are listed in random order. First the view of Stichting De Bovenlanden is analyzed, followed by the breeders, Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie, Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden, Ons Aller Belang, the municipality of Aalsmeer and Amsterdam Marketing.

5.1 Stichting De Bovenlanden

Stichting De Bovenlanden was originally a Public-Private Cooperative (Publieke Private Samenwerking). Several stakeholders are represented in the board: two representatives from horticulture industry, two breeders of bushes (heesters), one representative from nature education, one representative from Old Aalsmeer, one employer from Landschap Noord Holland and one person from the province Noord Holland. The objective of Stichting de Bovenlanden is to preserve and develop the cultural values of the landscape of the Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer. The foundation purchases and conserves areas at the Uiterweg, Oosteinderweg and Westeinder Plassen. According to Stichting De Bovenlanden

“to conserve the landscape character, we thought the only option is to start buying [fields] and making sure the province includes it [conservation of the landscape character] in the plans of the Ecologische Hoofdstructuur of the province.”

The Stichting uses these newly bought areas to create natural reeds and forests, or for arable farming, since Stichting De Bovenlanden finds it important to conserve both nature and culture:

“I think we have to keep this option [cultivation] by buying lilac fields and rent them, and if they cannot be rented, partly turning them into nature. We want some parts to become nature but we certainly do not want to turn everything into a forest, we want to keep some cultivated fields.”

In this way, ecological connections are formed between different natural areas stretching from the Schinkelbos to Westeinder Plassen. Currently, the Stichting owns about 120 to 130 islands/fields in total. Stichting de Bovenlanden hopes that in the future the area will not get cluttered by regulations and the enforcement of these regulations. They stand positively towards increasing recreation possibilities in the area, although they should fit as much as possible into the existing landscape features, “it depends strongly on the influence it will have on the area itself” (Stichting De Bovenlanden). Stichting De Bovenlanden sees possibilities for leisure and tourism activities as long as these activities are clustered next to the village and do not hamper the landscape. According to Stichting “the area got watersport potential, for the somewhat quieter watersport”. They think that the marinas could play a role to attract tourists if tourists are allowed to stay in the marinas.

⁴ Compared to the proposal a change has been made, as the team decided to dismiss STUW (Stichting Transformatie Uiterweg en Westeinderplassen) from the list. This association represents several independent stakeholders, which were already individually interviewed and analyzed. Taking this into account, the association was not seen as useful anymore. Instead Amsterdam Marketing is added to the list, since it is related to tourism activities in the region.

5.2 Breeders of Uiterweg

Breeders are expected to have left the area within twenty years, due to an increase in production costs (i.e. increasing environmental requirements), a decrease in revenues and a lack of potential successors. The fourteen breeders which are located in the Uiterweg area have united to develop a future vision for the area. They collectively wrote their vision in 'Uiterweg & Kleine Poel: Hoe geven wij in de toekomst meerwaarde aan het gebied?', in which they indicate to preserve the current structure of the landscape in order to maintain the value of the little islands and ditches. Because in the future, agriculture seems hardly possible anymore, water recreation is seen as desirable alternative. According to the breeders of Uiterweg, this should go together with a greater accessibility to water and more residences (Gemeente Aalsmeer, 2012). One of the remaining breeders sees possibilities in the tourism industry for a few approximately five (ibid.) local breeders, because "tourists should see how lilacs are bred. This is essential because it is the only place in the Netherlands where one can see this and they grow almost nowhere else in the world" (ibid.). He sees a future for attracting more tourists only when "not too much activities, bars etc. [are realized]. All has to go in harmony with nature" (ibid.).

5.3 Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie (SAWP)

Over fifty watersport-related companies are included in SAWP, including marinas, shipyards, contractors and watersport shops (Gemeente Aalsmeer, 2012). The main goal of SAWP is to promote Aalsmeer as a place known for its watersport facilities. SAWP tries "to promote as much as possible the water sports in Aalsmeer". Besides, they want to use parts of the newly available land (former farming fields) and water for more tourism facilities on land and water. These facilities could include besides different watersport facilities also ecological (tourism) accommodations. Increasing the diversity of recreational activities is favored over an expansion of the number of anchorages (Gemeente Aalsmeer, 2012). Outside the area of Uiterweg, Aalsmeer can be made more attractive by building a nautical center. Wharfs, watersport related shops and food service industries can create a connection between the village and the water. Without any major changes, the area could be transformed, while keeping its current characteristics. Furthermore, the spokesman of the SAWP said "you have to go more international" in order to attract tourists. As an example the spokesman names homepages of local stakeholders and leisure and tourism operators, as these are not available in English. Additionally, he mentions that there should not only be a focus on elaborating the watersport sector in Aalsmeer to attract more people.

5.4 Stichting Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden (WZW)

The Stichting Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden is a cooperation of seven water sport associations. The aim of the Stichting is to organize sailing competitions and the sailing sport in general (www.stichtingwzw.nl). The Stichting regards promotion of tourism and leisure as a way to contribute to an economic impulse for the region. WZW sees potential especially in the Fort bij Kudelstaart "provided that it will be a dedicated sailing venue. The main feature of an event site is that it is empty whenever there are no events." They think that there is no capacity for events in normal marinas as the marinas are occupied. To organize sailing competitions they have close cooperation with National Class ('Nationale Klasse') organizations. In most cases they organize sailing class competitions, national championships and also sailing competitions for new sailors. These competitions take place on the Westeinder Plassen at Aalsmeer. Hereby, they focus especially on spectator friendly events (like the Regenboog Evenement) since "events like these attract visitors". The Stichting is one of the bigger organizations that organizes competitions in the Netherlands.

“Moreover, we bring foreign competitors and their families to Aalsmeer from as far away as Moscow. They come for sailing on our beautiful lake and can be seen as tourists also.”

Besides offering and organizing sailing competitions the Stichting has the plan to offer watersport courses in 2014 for the members of the seven different watersport associations that are part of the Stichting Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden (Westeinder Zeil Wedstrijden Nieuwsbrief, sept. 2013).

5.5 Neighborhood association: ‘Ons Aller Belang’ (Our Common Interest)

This neighborhood association was founded for local residents, who gather at arranged meetings. Ons aller belang assumes that something should be done with the breeding grounds in the future. However, the Uiterweg is saturated with traffic and any new plans for recreation should limit as much as possible the expected increase of traffic along the Uiterweg. The association awaits new plans before they react and tell their vision on the future of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer, because of the involvement of many different stakeholders in the region. The neighborhood association sees tourism as one of the opportunities to revive Aalsmeer again (Gemeente Aalsmeer, 2012).

5.6 Municipality

The city council of Aalsmeer consists of four people: the major and three aldermen (www.aalsmeer.nl/). The municipality wants to improve the tourism and leisure sector. Therefore, the municipality hired several people and collaborates with external organizations for example Amsterdam Marketing. The municipality represents the political and legal side of existing and proposed plans. It is in charge to give permission to execute a plan which could influence the future of Aalsmeer. The interviewed representative is one of the aldermen, responsible for spatial planning, tourism and leisure, culture and monuments. Currently, the municipality works on plans for the Uiterweg of Aalsmeer.

5.7 Amsterdam Marketing

Amsterdam Marketing is an organization that works in the fields of promotion, research, information and services in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam. The aim of Amsterdam Marketing is to make the region of Amsterdam one of the five most attractive metropolitan areas in Europe (www.iamsterdam.com). Currently, Amsterdam Marketing is working on an initiative to give the surrounding areas of Amsterdam different core values and promoting these, in order to attract tourists to the metropolitan area of Amsterdam. According to these core values Amsterdam Marketing can let tourists know which area they could visit according to the preferences of the tourist (e.g. if tourists are interested in flowers, they are advised to go to Aalsmeer). One of these regions is Aalsmeer, which has possible core values in watersport and flowers. Amsterdam Marketing is “collaborating with the municipality of Aalsmeer”. The organization should be viewed as an outsider of the community, but being involved in developing a tourism strategy for the region. They promote Aalsmeer to tourists according to the core values.

6. Analysis

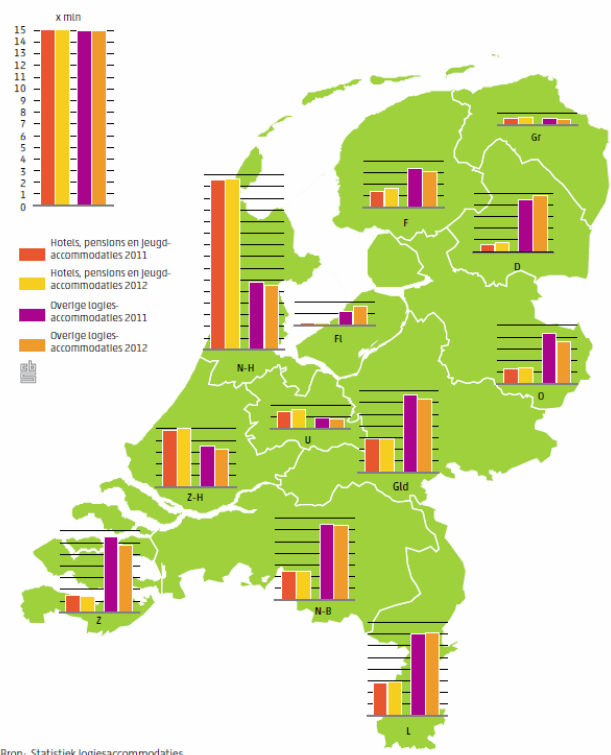
In this chapter an analysis of the current situation in Aalsmeer is provided. First some statistical data of the province will be given, including a rough overview of the amount of tourists, overnight stays and accommodations. After this an overview of the so called Gebiedsvisie is outlined. Next to these parts the major part of this chapter will be about the specific analysis of the current situation on tourism development in Aalsmeer, which is derived from the conducted interviews.. In the first section the communication between and networks of local stakeholders will be evaluated. Afterwards the current touristic opportunities are explored. The final two sections are on tourism and nature conservation, and regional branding. This part of the analysis is obtained by the analysis of the interviews.

6.1 Statistical data on tourism and leisure in Noord-Holland

This paragraph will concern data of the province of Noord-Holland. Another approach could have been to look on statistical data of the Hollands-Utrechtse meren, but since Aalsmeer is located near Amsterdam, visitors to Amsterdam are regarded as potential visitors for Aalsmeer as well. Next to this, most of the international visitors as well as business people will arrive by airplane in the Netherlands and thus arrive at Schiphol. Hence, the closeness of Schiphol to Aalsmeer can be regarded as an additional asset for Aalsmeer.

In 2012, a slight increase in overnight stays in hotels, pensions or other lodging accommodations is visible in comparison with 2011 (CBS, 2013), see Figure 2. Most visits to the province were made during the weekend, especially one day trips on Saturday increased the amount of tourists during the weekends. Over 20 million nights were spent in the province in 2012. 14 million of them were in a hotel, pension or youth accommodation. Furthermore, Noord-Holland has the most international guests who stay overnight of all the provinces in the Netherlands. 65% of all the people who stayed in the province were foreigners. It also has the highest percentage (62%) of overnight stays by international persons.

When looking to this data, it has to be taken into account that it these numbers are not only about tourism, but also referring to business stays as Noord-Holland had over 5 million business stays in 2012.



Bron: Statistiek logiesaccommodaties.

Figure 2: Overnight stays in Dutch tourist accommodations per province. Left orange bar = 2011 and yellow bar = 2012.

6.2 Current developments in the region

“Formulating strategies [e.g. on spatial planning or future vision] is vital for future [economic] growth.” (Valenzuela, 2007:280). In order to fulfill future prosperity, the municipality of Aalsmeer decided to work on a clear and common vision for the region’s future. The first so called ‘Gebiedsvisie’ was made in 2001. After eight years of working on this vision several of its ideas were implemented, e.g. the enlargement of residential areas and the detouring of the provincial road N201. In 2009, the municipality decided to make a (new) vision for Aalsmeer in cooperation with the inhabitants and local stakeholders.

The current Gebiedsvisie has four main goals: coherence, strategy, clearness and stimulus (Gebiedsvisie 2020, 2009). Since different ideas and views on the future have to be combined, coherence of these visions is an important factor. Various plans, such as spatial planning and assessment of new ideas, are part of the Gebiedsvisie until 2020. Therefore the paper is not only based on policy, but also on strategies for the area of Aalsmeer. Clearness is one of the most important goals of the Gebiedsvisie. All included stakeholders, such as inhabitants, associations and entrepreneurs, have to “feel comfortable” (ibid.: 3⁵) with it and have to know what is meant with the new plans. Stimulating local private parties and other governmental organizations is needed to execute the new plans. The Gebiedsvisie shows possible plans for five different zones in Aalsmeer. The role of the municipality is supposed to be ‘directing’. Therefore, the municipality has to know for all the plans which persons and what instruments are needed to fulfill their goals, but still keeping in mind the cooperation with different parties. To conclude, Aalsmeer wants a sustainable and strong development of the economy, living and recreation, under the condition of preserving the quality of life, the rustic image, the attainability, and getting and keeping up its services (ibid.: 29).

In order to come up with possible solutions for the future of Aalsmeer, looking to comparable regions is an option. Therefore the next section will be about the National Park Weerribben-Wieden, where a similar landscape is present.

Comparable landscape region

When looking to the origin of the area Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer, the excavating of peat, some similar areas can be found in the Netherlands. The biggest and probably best known is the National Park Weerribben-Wieden. This site’s current appearance was shaped about two centuries ago, when people were excavating peat. When new fuels were used, the excavating stopped and local people had to look for new possibilities to earn money. People started to realize the uniqueness of the man-made landscape (<http://www.np-weerribbenwieden.nl/>). Therefore, when farmers started to sell their lands, from the 20’s in the previous century on, they decided to sell their land – partly to nature protection associations. Nowadays, these associations are cooperating with local people to ensure the natural values of the area. Different kinds of flora and fauna, typical for marsh areas, can be found due to the way they are currently managing the area.

Besides the conservation of nature, the region (Weerribben-Wieden) is doing well as a popular touristic place. A small village in this region (not part of the National Park), Giethoorn, is known as the Venice of the Netherlands. Since boats can be rented at many different spots, people can go on the big lakes as well as in the small ditches and this place is appreciated by Dutch and international tourists (Briene et al., 2010). One way the National Park deals with tourists and preserves nature, is to assign certain routes for kayaking (Hut and Altenburg, 2008). People who are not familiar with the area will follow these routes, whereas other parts of the National Park will stay unused by tourists.

⁵ “ibid.: 3” means the same reference as the previous / last mentioned, on page 3

6.3 “We do it all separate” - Communication between and networks of stakeholders

Concerning cooperation and communication between networks and local initiatives, the analysis of the interviews suggests three different levels of cooperation: local initiatives or associations with the municipality (and vice versa), local initiatives and associations among each other, and communication and cooperation between the municipality/local associations with supra-regional or external stakeholders. These three types will briefly be discussed in this section.

The local stakeholders' (initiatives, formal networks and associations) opinion on the cooperation and communication between them and the municipality was rather diverse. While some stakeholders described the cooperation as open, “associations can go to the municipality when they have ideas or problems” (Ons Aller Belang), others described the cooperation as more difficult (Stichting De Bovenlanden). The municipality states that cooperation with local stakeholders is important: “We make plans in the city council together with the people in the region and plan for their future” (Municipality). Therefore, “we have to talk to the people to figure out which plans actually fit to implement” (ibid.). Whether or not (and to what extent) this does hold in practice, is difficult to assess at the moment, but regular meetings between the municipality and (some) important stakeholders take place (Ons Aller Belang). SAWP has regular meetings with the municipality “when they [municipality] have agenda points on watersports and its promotion” (SAWP).

The cooperation between the different local stakeholders certainly depends on the specific organization(s), but in general a major dispute or disagreement between some local stakeholders is the competition about who acquires the former breeders' land and how to use this land in the future. This conflict and the accompanying different views about the future of the land seems to shape and partly determine the cooperation between some of the interviewed stakeholders. Especially the question whether to renaturate it or to use it in order to attract tourists, leads to competing interests. As mentioned before, the municipality partly regards its role as a mediator to coordinate these different ideas and to facilitate cooperation. “I think we are successful in making them work together. I think that is my main role” (Municipality).

Crucial for sustainable development and shaping the region's future (in leisure and tourism) is cooperation between the local government and local entrepreneurs. In the region itself cooperation and coordination seems to emerge and maybe has become more significant and important over the past years⁶: “To develop tourism, yes, they cooperate with each other. But it is not a long period of time they started with this cooperation” (Amsterdam Marketing).

Networks of and cooperation between local organizations and supra-regional institutions hardly exists except for the municipality⁷. Amsterdam Marketing sees the municipality as the “first stakeholder” (ibid.) in Aalsmeer, for instance about implementing and developing the so-called ‘visit Amsterdam, see Holland’ project - a project with 29 participating municipalities in the wider region of Amsterdam. The idea of the project is to provide “information to tourists of Amsterdam, what is going on in this region. Therefore, we have 18 characteristics to be defined, such as flowers and also the beach of Amsterdam. For Aalsmeer, there are two interesting characters, flowers and the leisure lake” (ibid.). According to the municipality, next to the cooperation with Amsterdam Marketing, further collaborations exist “with other city councils to the south side of Aalsmeer, which are also

⁶ “From the municipality there is a recreation and tourism platform with different stakeholders...organized by the municipality” (SAWP).

⁷ SAWP mentioned a former cooperation with the HISWA Holland Yachting Group that was ended some years ago.

situated near a lake. We work together to promote the lakes for watersports...to promote the whole region, so not just one lake" (Municipality).

Although there is communication, cooperation and network relationships between the different local stakeholders, between local stakeholders and the municipality and between the municipality and external stakeholders, there seems to be a lack of efficient cooperation between the different stakeholders as a whole (Stichting De Bovenlanden). "There is not something common, we all do it separate" (SAWP). Although several local initiatives exist, there is less coordination between the activities of the different stakeholders: "We do a lot but we do it not together. You don't have to do everything together, but we have a lot of voluntary organizations who organize events. We have the triathlon, we have the boat show, we have the firework but most of them are voluntarily" (ibid.). Also according to the municipality, a lot of progress could be made in the tourism sector if (potential) touristic activities would be combined: "He [the tourist] wants to have breakfast, he wants to go somewhere, after that he would like to visit a museum that provides a lot of information about flower production, the historical garden" (Municipality).

It is not assessable within the scope of this paper whether this lack of cooperation or coordination is more derived from the different views of the stakeholders, or whether it derives more from an entrepreneurial tradition of the people in Aalsmeer. People and family businesses were "not used to working together. They have their own plans. They make their own plans and they are doing it. That is how entrepreneurs work. But now we are in the next phase. We have to combine our strengths" (Municipality).

A potential lack of cooperation or coordination is perceived by the stakeholder outside the regional context of Aalsmeer as well: "Now they have too many ideas, too many people do too little things and then they may not come up with a big decision in this community" (Amsterdam Marketing). Maybe the assumption of a lack of cooperation between the different stakeholders in the region is even not appropriate and one could assume that this lack is indeed more a coordination issue. Many of the stakeholders seem to have "a strong will to do, [a] strong ambition to do. But it is not easy to make a step forward, because there is no strong organization that forces everyone together and there are many people with different ideas. So, it is very difficult to focus" (ibid.). This lack of coordination of different tourism related activities is recognized by the municipality, that tries to act as regional coordinator: "So what I am trying to do is to help companies over here [in Aalsmeer] to come together and make arrangements" (Municipality)⁸. But an effective and efficient coordination of local stakeholders seems to be missing. Another attempt to overcome this lack of an overall organization, was the foundation STUW (Stichting Transformatie Uiterweg en Westeinder). Breeders, marinas and local people are represented in this recently founded association (Ons Aller Belang), Stichting De Bovenlanden and the municipality are not included. Although the municipality is not included in the STUW, both have close and good contact (ibid.). Still, STUW is probably not regarded or recognized by the interviewed stakeholders as overall network.

Summary:

Many local initiatives and (partly contradicting) ideas that could be relevant for the development and planning of (future) tourism and leisure (activities) co-exist in the region. A lack of coordination and cooperation seems to hamper the development of tourism.

⁸ "We have no function in between the local...but we have the goal to see if we can help locally, to get the parties together. They can cooperate together, and then we can take them into our promotion" (Amsterdam Marketing).

Recommendations:

- Improve coordination among the relevant stakeholders.
- Take into account different, even opposing ideas of the region and try to find compromises in order to build a common vision.
- A possibility could be the foundation of a new network, including the municipality, internal and external stakeholders. Hereby, the municipality or an external stakeholder could take over the role of a mediator. If sufficient networks already exist (e.g. STUW), consider their reorganization, for instance by opening them up for new stakeholders (compare: creative ideas).
- One stakeholder, the municipality or an external expert⁹ could take the lead or the coordinating role within the network and between different stakeholders.
- One single idea or project is unlikely to significantly contribute to sustainable tourism in the area. Hence, the combination of ideas, projects and tourist offers can be essential. One possibility could be the development of for instance theme routes (compare: creative ideas)).
- Create an awareness of the network (e.g. branding, logo (compare: creative ideas)).
- If not conducted yet, organize workshops on (sustainable) tourism and leisure development or arrange regular meetings between (opposing) local (and superregional) stakeholders to discuss and weigh new or common approaches/projects and ideas.

6.4 Tourism in Aalsmeer

6.4.1 Aalsmeer as tourist destination

Aalsmeer does probably not have THE one main attraction - the one product to sell - that attracts tourists. "We have nothing outstanding. We have not a sort of mascotta" (SAWP). This missing mascot is also mentioned by Amsterdam Marketing, as "there is not one product we can refer to" (Amsterdam Marketing) if tourists are asking what to visit in the area. Instead a variety of activities or tourism foci emerge. From the local stakeholders' point of view, Aalsmeer's nature has potential to attract tourists (SAWP, Stichting De Bovenlanden, Amsterdam Marketing). Aalsmeer "is for those who love nature" (Stichting De Bovenlanden). The municipality representative mentioned as an attraction of Aalsmeer, the visibility of Dutch history in the town and its surroundings: "You can find a lot of things that are representative for Holland here in Aalsmeer. I think this is one of the very strengths of Aalsmeer that we have" (Municipality). Similarly, Amsterdam Marketing regards the region as "very charming, because they have islands, they have history". Watersports (Municipality, SAWP), the fortress (Municipality) and the auction - respectively flowers - (Amsterdam Marketing, SAWP) were mentioned as well. "We have the water tower, we have the lake, we have the big European water ball area" (SAWP). Next to the natural or cultural conditions and the activities in the

⁹ A so called DMO - Destination Management Organization - could take over an externally leading or coordinating role. According to the definition of the World Tourism Organization "the primary function of the DMO is to serve as a coordinating body for the many public- and private-sector organizations involved in tourism" (WTO, 1979). According to Dwyer and Chulwon the tasks of the DMO can partly include the provision of leadership in order to "to provide overall direction for tourism development within the destination. In all cases the function is to enable the many parts of the tourism sector to work together, and thus compete more effectively, design and implement public consultation techniques and processes in order to involve all stakeholders in making tourism-related decisions. The DMO can improve the management and development of tourism by ensuring coordination and cooperation between the different agencies, authorities and organizations concerned at all levels" (2003: 388). In other words, a DMO is responsible for the destination's strategic management and marketing. Lewis et al. go further and extend the tasks of the DMO. Among the extended tasks they name to "collecting, analyzing and disseminating market research data, establishing a representation in the main target markets of origin, participating in trade shows, organizing and coordinating familiarization trips and supporting the private sector in the production and distribution of literature such as information relating to analysis of characteristics of key travel markets related to travel volume and associated spending" (1995: 379).

region - mainly referring to the lake and flowers - a lot of local initiative exists to shape the region's future and to develop tourism and leisure. The spatial closeness to Amsterdam and the fact that Aalsmeer has one of the biggest lakes in Holland, is seen as an additional asset to attract tourists and create leisure pursuits.

Again, the variety of potential touristic and recreational activities in the region - or the lack of one specific touristic attraction - is neither necessarily an advantage nor a disadvantage. But it should be taken into account whether to decide where the future focus of (sustainable) tourism efforts will and should be. This decision could include what touristic or recreational items of the region are worth promoting and whether a focus on promotion should be chosen: the lake, the flowers, or the region (including both). Additionally and closely linked to the latter point, is the decision whether to focus on a specific target group - like international or national tourists - and on a certain kind of holiday and leisure seekers. This should especially be taken into account, as tourist services and offers should first of all be oriented towards and developed from the touristic demand. Jointly agreeing and focusing on (future) touristic core topics¹⁰ beyond the borders of local associations might serve as way to commonly identify target groups.

Summary:

Aalsmeer does probably not have THE one main attraction to promote to tourists. Though, flowers (nature) and watersports (lake) play an outstanding role. The closeness to Amsterdam and local bottom-up initiatives which aim to contribute to a change in the region are assets in order to attract tourists and create a recreation area. Instead of regarding the lack of one main attraction, as an obstacle, opportunities in promoting the region as a whole might emerge.

Recommendations:

- The lack of THE selling product and THE main attraction in the area, makes coordination and cooperation even more important.
- If not decided yet, consider making a decision on whether to put the focus in the long run on promoting the lake or flowers, or whether to promote the region including both elements. If not decided yet, consider making a decision on whether to put the focus in the long run on national leisure or international tourism or whether to focus on both elements.
- Define a target group or target groups.

6.4.2 Watersports

For some stakeholders watersports played an important role as recreational activity in order to attract visitors (SWAP, Municipality, Amsterdam Marketing). But currently, it seems that "too many people are passing by Aalsmeer, without visiting" (Ons Aller Belang). According to the local breeder, "the Westeinder Plassen do not have that good facilities as Loosdrechtse and Vinkeveense Plassen",

¹⁰ Touristic core topics include but are not limited to:

- Nature vacations: Central motives: nature attraction, activities like hiking, cycling, water hiking (canoeing) and watersports.
- Beach and Bathing vacation: relaxing at the beach, more hedonistic motives (beauty, getting taint) etc.
- Activity holiday: closely linked to nature vacations, but motivation shaped by focus on experiencing and fun during hiking, cycling, water-hiking.
- Vacations on the farm: especially for families. Farm experience and animals in the center.
- Health: Offers with health benefit (wellness, naturopathy) (BMW 2013: 11).

as watersport tourists are allegedly not staying longer in the area than necessary - for instance for drinking or eating. Stichting De Bovenlanden agrees with watersports on the lake, as long as it is along the Uiterweg. They do not appreciate big activities in the middle part of the lake (the islands), only usage for recreational purposes.

According to Amsterdam Marketing, one of the things to improve in order to attract more tourists is to create (more) possibilities to rent boats. The current situation is especially suitable for those who already own a boat, but for passengers (tourists) who would like to rent a boat for a short period of time, hardly any possibilities exist (Amsterdam Marketing). Furthermore, (some) activities should be available whole year round and not only season bounded, in order distribute the number of tourists and profits more or less equally over the year. From (part of) the interviewed stakeholders' point of view, it seems that at the moment especially local people are familiar with the activities on the lake and therefore most activities remain on a small scale level.

Summary:

Generally, the interviewed stakeholders seem to agree on having watersports in the area. Nature friendly watersport(er)s seem to be favored. Hence, a good balance has to be found between what should be or stay nature and what is accessible for boats and tourists, to go ashore.

Recommendations:

- More possibilities to go ashore, together with pubs or restaurants.
- Divide facilities all over the lake, but keep the main overnight stay possibilities at one place (e.g. in city centre or near Vrouwentroost).
- Make different activities easily accessible for outsiders.

6.4.3 Finding a balance - Nature, tourism and nature conservation

Since nature is one of the main characteristics of the area, tourists visit the region especially because of the nature (Amsterdam Marketing). One of the main questions emerging in this context is: Can nature and tourism go hand in hand? "Yes", according to the municipality, "but choices have to be made" and a good plan is needed, in order not to overuse nature. Accordingly, certain areas could be closed for tourists while others could be visited for walking or boating. It seems essential that "nature and tourism have to go in harmony in the future" (Breeder). On the other hand it might be necessary to first promote tourism, before regulations can be made (Amsterdam Marketing). If no tourists are visiting the area, less plans on tourism need to be developed for the area.

The Westeinder Plassen are partly described as "very quiet" (Stichting De Bovenlanden). No speed boats are speeding on the major part of the lake and this is, according to the Stichting De Bovenlanden also not desired. Though, a special speed area does exist in the southern part of the lake. Stichting De Bovenlanden regards nature conservation as a good way to keep the area relatively quiet. Their future vision of the area is a clustered horticulture alternating with nature and open spots (abandoned acres). Ons Aller Belang would like to conserve some nature, but not "too much, since there was also no nature present here in the 20's and 30's" (Ons Aller Belang). In their opinion, not everything should be nature, since arable land - together with the open areas - is important as well. According to the municipality nature may not be damaged by tourists. On the other hand tourists bring along economic value: when tourists visit the area and spend their money in the village – this money could in turn be invested in the maintenance and conservation of the local nature. According to Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie nature conservation "of course" (ibid.) plays an important role. "If everything is recreation it is not nice. If everything is nature it is not nice because there are too many trees" (ibid.). Therefore, the future use should not be focused on nature

conservation only, but should be differentiated to please all stakeholders (ibid.). Different stakeholders agree on keeping a certain amount of nature for future generations, as long as the arable lands also keep existing. The extent to which nature should be conserved differs among the stakeholders.

Summary:

All stakeholders agree that to some extent nature and arable land have to be maintained in the future, since nature is a significant part of Aalsmeer's history. On the other hand some stakeholders also would appreciate having (more) tourists visiting the area. Therefore tourism and nature should go hand in hand, as long as it is within certain boundaries. These boundaries vary for the different stakeholders, but in general the interviewed stakeholders agree, that nature in the region should not become an overused resource and a too crowded place.

Recommendation:

- Make use of sustainable tourism. This way of tourism can contribute to change people's attitudes towards the environment and, if exploited well, it can also be economically profitable (Balmford et al., 2009; Buckley, 2012).

6.5 Branding strategies and characteristics of the area

Branding a region - A brief overview

Strategically branding a region (including developing a logo) can in the long run have potential to increase tourism and recreation activities in the region. Some advantages that can accompany a successful branding strategy are an increased recognition value and more efficient marketing of the area, (re)organization of networks - with cooperating but competing local stakeholders - and an increased identification of inhabitants with the region. In Aalsmeer such a branding strategy seems to be missing so far.

Based on a case study on the place branding process of the Swedish region Øresund, that aimed to give the region a competitive edge, Petersen refers to a tripartite approach how to develop a regional brand:

1. Find and describe the values to form the basis of regional integration.
2. Produce a logo and name it.
3. Make a plan for communication and marketing (2010: 86).

Crucial in his opinion is hereby that local inhabitants and a broad range of local representatives from the political, economic, cultural sectors are included in the branding process (ibid.: 79). In this way collaboration across networks (ibid.: 83) could be facilitated, since place branding is always a combination of (newly) organizing and marketing an area. Essential for (successfully) developing a brand is the local(s') identification with the brand. Therefore, the brand should not only be promoted externally - outside of the region - but also internally - within the region itself. A certain specific brand or logo that people generally identify with does not yet exist in the area. "Some people here even don't know we have the biggest sailing lake in Holland" (Municipality). Especially "outsiders [people who work outside of Aalsmeer and recently moved to the area] have to become familiar with the Westeinder Plassen as well" (Ons Aller Belang). A branding strategy could contribute to this identification process internally and furthermore connect activities in Aalsmeer that have not been combined yet. According to SAWP Aalsmeer does have attractions for tourists, such as the water tower and the flower auction. The problem that emerges is that the different attractions seem to be

disconnected: “There is a lot do in Aalsmeer but there is no connection between the things” (SAWP). This alleged lack of coordination is complemented by the lack of one specific product or site in the area - as mentioned Chapter 2.

Still there are ways to brand a region without referring to one specific product or site. In the following, three main types of brands for (certain aspects of a) region in order to develop and contribute - in this case - to sustainable touristic development are briefly named:

- *Product brands*: They refer to a concrete specific product and are managed by its operator or provider (e.g. Gouda).
- *Destination brands*: They refer to a particular region and emphasize its unique and trans-regionally known features.
- *Program brands*: They bundle individual products and/or product brands along a particular topic (e.g. hiking along a particular route), for a certain target group (e.g. families) or certain infrastructural facilities (e.g. bio-hotels). These brands can but do not have to have a regional relatedness and are often controlled by certain service providers or operators (BMW 2012: 8f).

It is the decision of the (new) network or the leading parts of the network (e.g. municipality or external experts etc.) to agree on a branding strategy. Based on the interviews, the lake (watersports) and flowers (breeding culture) could be the determining aspects of such a strategy (compare next sub-chapter). According to Holdings and Marsden essential is that such a strategy does “not only include what a region is, but also what it desires to be in the future” (2011: 12). In their opinion, this awareness or agreement “can lead to new ideas, images, products, alliances, organization forms and services” (idem). Árnason et al (2009) who compared six different regions in Europe on the process of branding in networks come up with three divided aspects of branding in networks: (1) increased visibility, (2) development of new products, and (3) reorganization of activities. Additionally, an increased visibility “can people make more aware of the qualities of their places, which enhance new innovations” (Holdings and Marsden, 2011: 12). Whether indeed no brand in Aalsmeer exists so far, or whether an already existing brand (or logo) has to be reorganized, remains to be seen, but the stakeholders do not use a common brand (or linking logo) so far. As outlined, branding a region can have several advantages. However, a branding strategy should be a long term decision, as branding changes might be difficult to achieve and costly - time and money-wise. Hence, it is crucial to include locals and local stakeholders in the process in order to create dedication to the brand and increase the chances of its success.

Perceived characteristics of the area

Interviewees regard the lake (SAWP, Amsterdam Marketing, Municipality, Ons aller Belang) and flowers (SAWP, Breeder, Amsterdam Marketing) as the two main characteristics of the region. According to local stakeholders (Stichting De Bovenlanden, SAWP, Municipality), watersports play an important role in the region, as the lake is Holland’s biggest sailing lake (Ons Aller Belang). Concerning nature, flowers¹¹ were mentioned, as well as the region’s typical horticulture “that is known by breeders all over the world” (Stichting De Bovenlanden). Besides that, the typical islands (Amsterdam Marketing, Breeder) and the flower auction, as “the only auction you can visit in Holland” (Amsterdam Marketing), seemed to be important.

¹¹ “The flower is an attraction on itself. Except for Aalsmeer, it is not really so important for other regions. The flower auction is an attraction on itself” (Amsterdam Marketing).

The landscape in the region of Aalsmeer, and especially the Westeinder Plassen, is distinctive for the history of a former peat area, where people excavated the peat. These excavations were conducted in straight canals. Local people used these canals as waterways to transport their goods. Nowadays, the islands - the not excavated parts - are used as arable land; others are assigned to be nature. These little islands and ditches are regarded as a main characteristic of the area (Breeder), whereas the specific alternation with nature is perceived as an additional region specific feature (Stichting De Bovenlanden and Ons Aller Belang).

Next to landscape characteristics, also the appearance of houses is seen as typical for Aalsmeer. All houses are built along the road, with greenhouses at the houses' backside (Stichting De Bovenlanden). This so called 'ribbon building' is the result of local regulations, since it was only allowed to build houses within a maximum distance from the road. Hence, backyards were only used as building sites for greenhouses by breeders (ibid.).

The Promotion of Aalsmeer

The promotion of Aalsmeer, nationally as well as internationally, is inevitably linked to the provision of information to international tourists. The fact that almost no information about Aalsmeer can be found in foreign languages is a pitfall for international tourists (Municipality, SAWP). Almost all leaflets, brochures and websites are in Dutch and therefore it is hard for international tourists to make plans when visiting Aalsmeer. Even a lot of Dutch people do not know that it is one of the biggest inland lakes in the Netherlands - maybe due to lack of internal promotion or attachment to the lake. Also the idea to "make every citizen of Aalsmeer an ambassador of Aalsmeer as a water tourist attraction" (Municipality) is inherently linked to internal branding and promotion within Aalsmeer itself. Inhabitants and people who recently moved to Aalsmeer, are said not to be aware of the big lake next door (Municipality, Ons Aller Belang). Various local stakeholders are already organizing (small) events in order to promote the Westeinder Plassen. When activities are organized, it is hard to also promote them outside of Aalsmeer (SAWP), since announcements in regional newspapers require financial means. Hence, advertisements and announcements are mainly published in local papers (ibid.). Consequently it seems that mainly local people participate in the announced events. Supraregional cooperation between different areas (for instance for certain combined events) and a stronger focus on online advertisements / announcements can be possibilities to mitigate this lack.

Summary:

Branding a region can be regarded as a way to increase an area's recognition value and to create a region's "selling product". Different branding strategies are possible to achieve this aim. It is essential to include the local population in the branding process, to refer to perceived main characteristics of the area and to embed what a region desires to be in the future. The perceived main characteristics of the Aalsmeer region are the lake with its small islands and narrow channels as well as watersports. Furthermore, flowers - respectively the way of breeding (horticulture) - and the auction house are region specific features. However, an identifiable common brand (item) or branding strategy does either not exist or is not internalized by the local stakeholders, yet. Still there is potential to develop a certain brand (including a logo) in order to create an (new) awareness of the area within and outside of the region.

Recommendations:

- Develop a brand / logo for the region if no logo exists yet.
- Include local stakeholders within the brand and the process of developing a brand - if necessary, think about a new network (further developed in Chapter 7).
- Develop a common platform for the brand (for instance a homepage) (compare: creative ideas).

- Include local people (non-members of associations, normal citizens) in developing the logo.
- Promote this brand / logo internally, within Aalsmeer, and externally, outside of Aalsmeer.
- Take the closeness to Amsterdam (and its airport) as an additional asset for a branding strategy
- Promote the area, start on a small scale, for instance inhabitants, and work towards a bigger level, such as national and eventually international tourists and visitors. Information has to be available in English as well.

7. Creative ideas

Derived from the analysis of the collected data, creative ideas on how to further develop tourism and leisure in Aalsmeer are worked out and suggested in the following chapter. According to three problems identified in the previous chapter (lack of networking, combined activities and branding), the team proposes three categories of creative ideas that aim to tackle these problems. The first section deals with branding and networking in which different propositions are made to coordinate, brand and foster Aalsmeer as a tourism destination. In the second section the team suggests combined activities packages like 'theme' routes. In the third section, the idea of a water theater and lake stage is presented. These creative ideas are not based on tourists' desires and needs but derive from stakeholders' inputs and from the interview analysis in the previous chapter.

7.1 Branding and networking

7.1.1 Building a network

Derived from the interview analysis a lack of communication and networks among the stakeholders seems to exist.

The team suggests all stakeholders to work together in order to set up an association for developing tourism and leisure activities in this region. This association plays a coordinating role between the different stakeholders and fulfills collective tasks such as regional branding and supra-regional cooperation.

However, there are assumed difficulties to form such an association, because every stakeholder has its own interests and vision for developing this region. Hence, to form a common vision is rather tough to achieve. In this process, the municipality should be actively involved and play the role as initiator and mediator to help different stakeholders agree on a common vision of future tourism development.

7.1.2 Creating a logo

In order to promote the region, a logo for Aalsmeer as a tourism destination is necessary. A memorable destination logo is one way to attain the competitive edge in international tourism branding (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001; Kleppe and Mossberg, 2006). As visual symbols – logos – are recognized faster than words (Edell and Staelin, 1983). Hence, a catchy logo is essential for developing a tourism destination. A good logo can evoke tourists' sensory and emotional response towards a place's or a product's unique characteristics (Müller et al, 2013; S Lee et al, 2012).

A positive affective reaction is a general sense of joy and excitement if there is a visual stimulus or logo present. With frequent exposures, these positive affective reactions become stronger (Zajonc, 1968). This is especially useful for attracting tourists who do not have a well scheduled tour plan in their mind. Hence, the team suggests Aalsmeer to expose its logo at all possible and relevant locations the tourists are gathering in Amsterdam. If the main target group of Aalsmeer are international tourists visiting Amsterdam, the tourist agencies in Amsterdam are the most important network partner for Aalsmeer. A long-term partnership with these agencies in Amsterdam is a good strategy to bring tourists who do not have a well scheduled plan to Aalsmeer. This is the most effective way to address the target group. Besides, the tourist map is also a good place to expose Aalsmeer's logo.

Additionally, to put a short slogan with logo is also a way to strengthen the exposure effect. A good slogan enhances the brand's image, aids in its recognition and recall, as well as it helps to create brand differentiation in consumers' minds (Kohli et al, 2007). When it is applied for promoting

tourism destination, the choice of the slogan is often considered as a critical decision, because it represents the nature and culture in a specific region, at the same time serving as central theme of regional advertising and economic development initiatives (Klenosky and Gitelson, 1997). Here the team proposes one slogan like: 'come to Aalsmeer, see the rest of Holland'. Because the majority of the target group is coming to visit Amsterdam, and a large proportion of it will probably travel to other countries afterwards. The team assumes they would like to see some other typical things of the Netherlands in a place with a typical Dutch landscape and which is nearby.

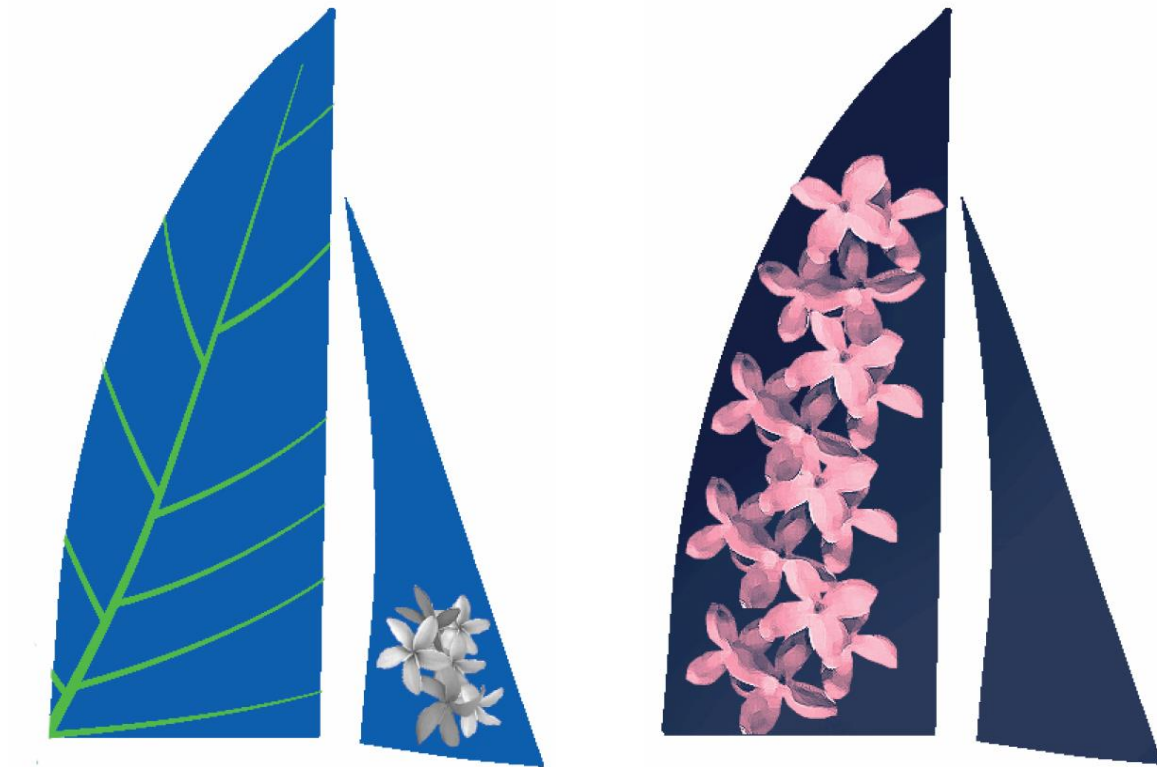


Figure 3: Examples of logos for Aalsmeer, where watersport is symbolized by the sails and the cultural history through the lilacs.

7.1.3 Advertisement

To elaborate some picturesque videos or articles with typical images of Aalsmeer, and to use it as posts on social travel network website or software applications, for example Trip Advisor, Booking, Google Trip and Trippy. According to Funsherpa (2012), 87 % of travelers worldwide used the internet for a bulk of their trip planning. Through these social media networks, tourists also post their review about the hotel (46 %), activities/attractions (40 %) and restaurants (40 %). This is a cheap way to attract tourists because such actions of posting photo or video are free. However, the effect of this way of attracting tourists is assumed to be limited. Normally, the posted pictures and videos can only be noticed when the tourists are pro-actively searching for this region or a region nearby. Instead of this cheaper way, spending money to post advertisements on homepages of these social networks can be a more effective way of advertising.

7.1.4 Guiding Website

A well designed website can be an important tool to attract tourists. It is the first impression the tourists get from a region if tourist look for information of the region online. It offers the easiest way for the tourists to find information about a region and it is also possible to value the potential

enjoyments they would have there. It should be a nice and tourist-friendly website that provides all kinds of information regarding tours and links to potential activities.

In order to build such a website, diversified and interesting activities should be available there, so that tourists can easily find the desired products and services for their trip. Besides, a well-built network can also be helpful to facilitate the guiding website by providing the destination as a combined product that allows tourists to enjoy in a great convenience such as journey planning and to have a safe trip. Only in this way, the website is able to provide convenient and well-organized services for tourists.

7.2 Tourist activities package

As described in Chapter 6 (analysis), from the local stakeholders' perspective Aalsmeer is missing linkages between different activities. Most activities in Aalsmeer are offered separately from each other. For example renting a boat to go on the Westeinder Plassen is not combined with other touristic and leisure activities or an anchoring place where one can eat or drink. Therefore, the team suggests to provide tourists and leisure seekers an activity package, where several activities are combined. Travelers could be offered a combined tourism product of separate goods and services as they see it as one packaged item (Kim and Wicks, 2010). By providing an activity package tourists could be tempted to participate into more activities compared to separately offered activities. This could make it more attractive for tourists or leisure seekers to spend a longer period of time in the region. An example of an activity package could be the combination of excursions through nature and education about the flower history of the region. Another example could be a theme route (cycling track, hiking path) focusing on one topic like flowers or watersports. Tourists could be introduced to the life of a lilac breeder by helping and accompanying a present-day breeder in his daily work. For their help the guests could be offered a dinner or an overnight stay for free or a reduced price. This concept of giving hands and experiencing farm life and in return receiving free accommodation or a meal is known as "WWOOF" (www.woofinternational.org). It is also possible to combine the stay with an excursion to the Bovenlanden (by boat or a canoe) or to the historical garden the next day. Here, the history of Aalsmeer and the horticulture history could be explained even in more detail.

Experiencing nature package

Nature is one of Aalsmeer's unique features. This feature could be exploited by having some well-designed routes that link bike and watersport activities across the lake, which may also include an excursion to the Bovenlanden. An example of such a route could be: starting in the city center with a visit to the historical garden, afterwards the tourists are taken by boat through the Bovenlanden, where they could be informed about the history and landscape of Aalsmeer (see Figure 4). The guests can be offered food and drinks on the boat (the yellow route), on a private island or they could be brought to a restaurant near the water, for example Restaurant Plasmeijer (the red route). After finishing the meal the next point on the agenda is Vrouwentroost. In this area already quite a diverse assortment of activities exists: there is a water tower and a fortress, there is a recreational area where people can go swimming or have a picnic. As these activities are relatively close to each other, an expansion of the provided activities could be considered here. Possibilities are: providing a restaurant, souvenir shop or additional recreational and watersport activities like the opportunity to dive, to rent a boat or to rent a bike. Kim and Wicks (2010) pointed out that there is often little competition between the producers of different products, as their products are complementing each other. In addition, clustering activities could also have advantages as tourists do not need to look for other places and are probably also more easily tempted to do other activities which are close by.

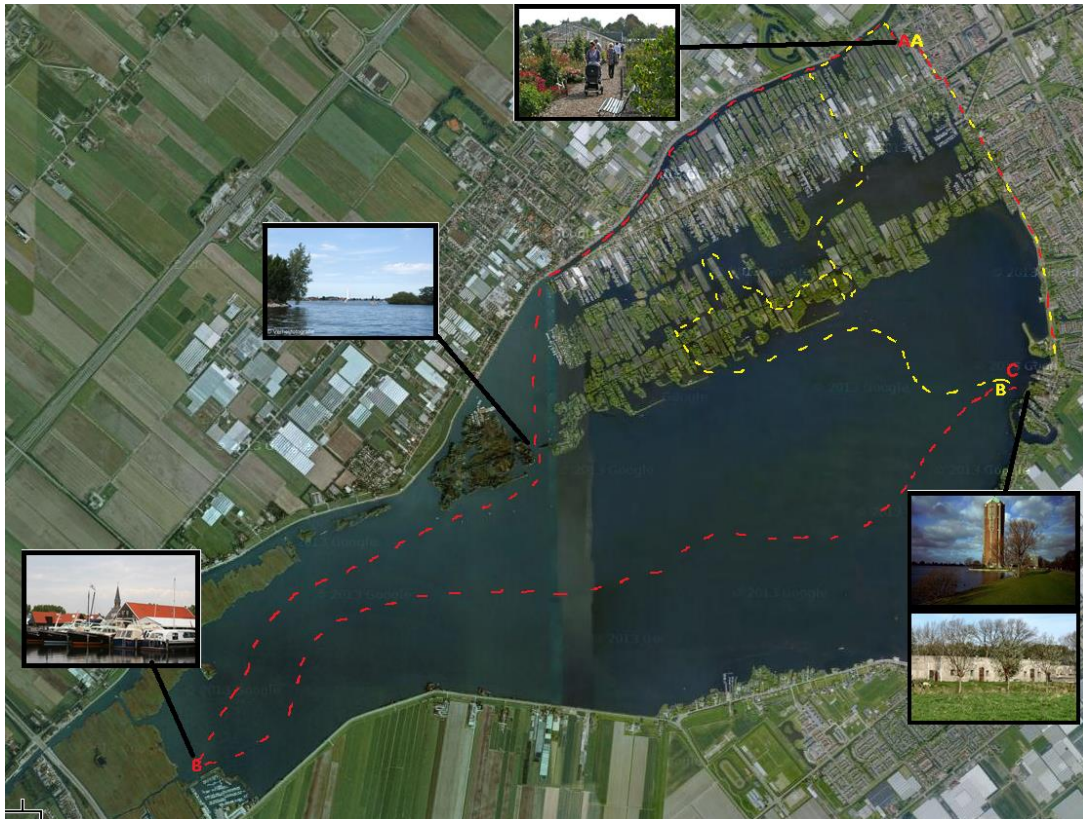


Figure 4: Map of possible thematic routes

7.3 Lake Theatre of Aalsmeer

Concept

The concept of a lake theatre seems rather self-explaining on a first glance: it is a theatre located on the lake. Spectators are watching from stands on the shore, while the play takes place on the stage in the water. The idea of an open air lake theatre in Aalsmeer is derived from an existing lake theatre in a German village called Markt Schwaben, located around 20 kilometers east of Munich in the southeast of Germany. Since 1984, the so called “Weiherspiele” (Lake Plays) exist there. Every year during the summer months July and August an annually changing play of non-professional actors takes triweekly place in the theatre. What makes the lake theatre unique, is its atmosphere with the scenery comprised of three small stages (including boats that are integrated in the play’s content) and its lighting that is reflected in the lake’s water. On average between 18,000 and 20,000 visitors visit the plays each year¹². Based on the average ticket price, the organizers of the plays gain revenues of around 360,000 Euro and additional 80,000 Euro for gastronomy each year. The permanent maintenance costs are – according to the organizers – rather high, resulting in fact that in good weather, profit is made while in bad weather no profit is possible, as the shows have to be cancelled – stage and stands are not roofed. Hence, in this specific case the weather dependency is very high. The lake plays are created as comprehensive events. They are integrated into the local market where visitors can purchase local handcrafts, souvenirs, beverages and foodstuffs before the show.

For Aalsmeer, this idea could generally be taken in to account, as the regional circumstances (metropolitan area, lake/pond, local initiative) are comparable on a first glance. Preliminary, the impact on nature seems limited, as the stage(s) in the lake would be designed as floating but anchored platforms close to the shore. Hence, they are removable. For the grand stands, removable

¹² Answered request of the project team.

stands could be taken into account as well. Still, weather dependency, parking spaces and locations for (removable) boosts can pose a problem. The major challenge to realize such a project is certainly to find the needed human resources such as actors, directors and stage builders as well as investors (especially during the first years). Regarding human resources, a cooperation with the city's theatre could be considered.

This idea will certainly not contribute to a significant increase in tourist numbers, but combined with other activities (for instance a combined ticket for a boat trip, dinner and visit to the theatre) it could contribute to promote other activities in the region. The plays and the local market can also be used as a marketing platform to increase the region's level of awareness to outsiders and in order to promote other activities in the area to visitors. Additionally, the stage could be rented out to (external) stakeholders for events like small concerts or readings.

Advantages

- Unique attraction in Holland – no lake theatre / lake plays exist so far as known.
- Attraction especially for national tourists.
- Nature change limited - degradable stages possible / stages on floating but grounded platforms.
- Linkage with local economy possible - local market(s), combinable tickets with other attractions in the region (boat trip etc.).
- Spatial closeness to Amsterdam.
- A theatre (actors, equipment etc.) exists in Aalsmeer.
- Successful and comparable example (in Germany) exists.
- Rent stage / use it for concerts, readings etc.

Disadvantages / risks

- Seasonality: Plays are possible during the summer months and in sufficient weather if stage / stands for spectators are not roofed.
- Hardly an option for international tourists – play's language is probably Dutch.
- Investments / sponsorship necessary – especially during the first years. (Assumed that numbers of spectator will increase by time and popularity)
- Local initiative and entrepreneurship needed – “get your hands dirty” mentality needed: actors, directors, scene builders needed. But: cooperation with and conduct by local theater imaginable.
- Long-term and small scale project: success (numbers of spectators) might only come gradually.
- Noise

Why good for leisure and tourism

- Leisure opportunity for locals and people from Amsterdam.
- Marketing opportunities for tourism: Event as platform to promote and combine with other activities (boat trip, dinner etc.).
- Increase city's and region's level of awareness (“Aalsmeer - the city of the lake theatre”).
- Possibilities to combine with local economy: not only the show but also local market for food and beverages, souvenirs and handcrafts etc.

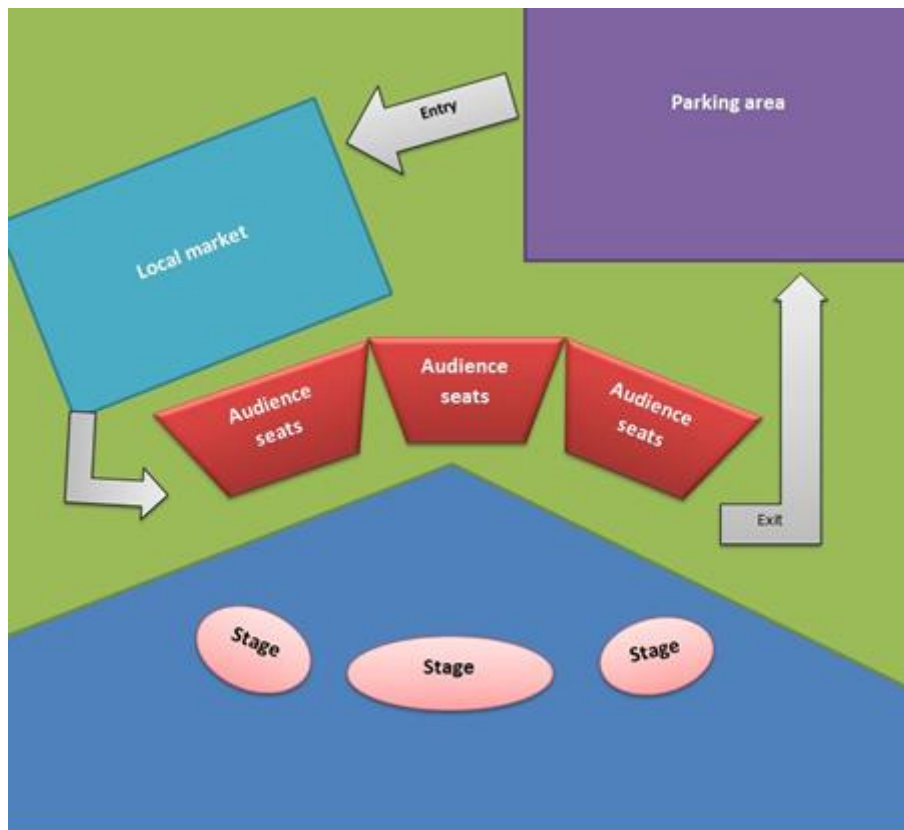


Figure 5: Sketch of lake theatre area (own image)

Lake stage and camping site

Concept

Developed from the idea of a small lake theatre, a (larger) lake stage could be a further option for the region. Central of the lake stage idea is not a certain regularly performed play, but the stage as an independent item instead; where various activities, for instance, symphony concerts or solo concerts of pop-stars can be performed. Again, the closeness to Amsterdam and the unique atmosphere of a concert on a lake can be regarded as the main advantages of a lake stage in this region. Additionally, more tourists and visitors over a longer period of time could be attracted by such an offer, as overnight accommodations on the nearby camping site could also be an option for younger visitors. These (young) visitors could then be seen as a new target group for watersports activities on the lake (clustered activities). The camping site would serve as an accommodation during the entire summer months and not only during concerts or smaller festivals. Hence, it would be an affordable overnight opportunity for passengers and campers passing through Aalsmeer and serve as a meeting point for tourists, where people come together and enjoy the plays or music. Possibilities to rent comfortable and weatherproofed tents should be considered as well. More tourists, who stay longer in the region, could be a result. For the region, unique branding strategies (Aalsmeer as a musical camping site) might emerge as well.

Certainly, the idea of a lake stage and a camping site requires a larger capacity than small scale theatre stages. Therefore, major challenges are the search for an appropriate location along the lake's shore, which is large enough to hold such activities (incl. needed parking spaces and buildings) and the willingness to engage in a bigger project. Furthermore, capacious common facilities like bathrooms, toilets and laundry rooms are additional investments that need to be made and which require a large ground to be built on.

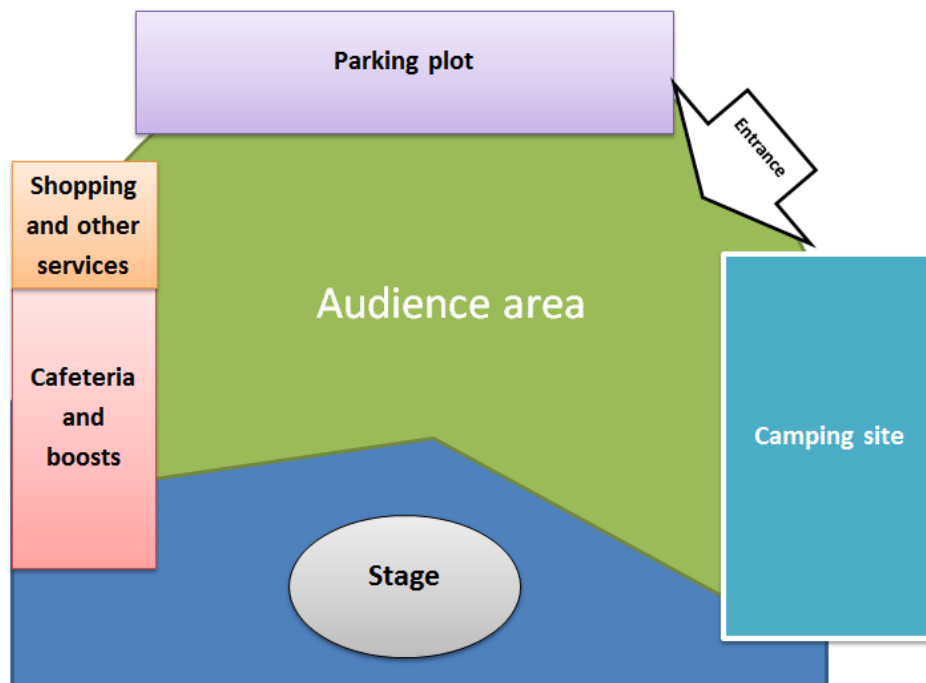


Figure 6: Sketch of lake stage area (own image)

8. Conclusion

This research was conducted to identify and create possible opportunities for the tourism and leisure sector in the region of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer. Currently, the region has already quite some activities for tourists and visitors. These activities are mainly focused on watersports activities and the flower history of Aalsmeer and are provided by different operators, which are primarily working individually. People in Aalsmeer have an entrepreneurial spirit, they are used to work on their own and discover new possibilities by themselves. There are differences between the visions of different local stakeholders, but most agree upon an Aalsmeer where nature is combined with culture. All interviewed stakeholders think that tourism is a good way to promote Aalsmeer. The main characteristics of Aalsmeer are the flower horticulture history, water sports and the unique combination of the culture and nature. These characteristics could be the advantage Aalsmeer has compared to other tourism destinations. A possible way to make Aalsmeer more well-known by visitors is branding the region, as it now seems that local people and stakeholders have no common identifiable brand or logo. But what is lacking in the touristic and leisure orientated activities are combinations between these activities, where visitors can choose a package of activities they prefer. Providing complementing activities through combinations, even packages of multiple days, could be an option to foster tourism. Unique activities in the Netherlands, like the lake theatre, could attract Dutch people to Aalsmeer. A common homepage with all relevant information and booking services available for Aalsmeer in multiple languages could be a way to attract international tourists. During the investigation also a possible lack of communication and cooperation between the current stakeholders seems to be present. There is cooperation but it seems mainly between certain associations. The creation of a common logo is therefore not accomplished yet. The team thus suggests to work on networking between the stakeholders, for example by creating a network where every major stakeholder is represented. Such a network could be coordinated by the municipality or an outsider.

9. Further research and recommendations

The recommendations and ideas, given in Chapter 6 and 7 from this report, are the final outcomes of this report, offered by the academic consultancy team. This end product should not be taken as a final report on the development of tourism and leisure in Aalsmeer. The team started without any knowledge about the area and the different interests. The end product can still be further developed by the commissioner or another party. Further research could be focused on one of the proposed ideas by elaborating on it more thoroughly and to check its feasibility. It is also important to investigate which (combined) activities the people in the region themselves assume to be feasible, as it is important to have support from the community. But not only the people from the region should be asked; to really focus on the development of specific activities it would be advisable to investigate the needs and wishes of the current but also future visitors of the region. With such in-depth investigations more detailed and sound-prove recommendations could be made.

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Appendix 1: Questions used during interviews

Leading Questions - Stichting De Bovenlanden

Interview with Nico Borgman

Conducted on 21-11-2013 between 10:00 - 11:00

Interviewers: Amber Visscher and Bram Wennekes

Language: Dutch

Introductie

Eigen introductie, uitleggen wat ACT is, onderzoeksdoel, Of de persoon anoniem wil blijven, BEGINNEN MET OPNEMEN. Dank u dat we u mogen interviewen.

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Zou u uzelf en de stichting die u vertegenwoordigd willen introduceren? (wat is u doel, wie bent u etc)

Would you please briefly introduce the Stichting / who you are / what you aim for etc.

2. Er zijn al samenwerkingen geweest tussen verschillende belanghebbenden en groepen, die geresulteerd hebben in bijvoorbeeld de Gebiedsvisie 202. Daaruit zijn al vele ideeën en mogelijkheden naar voren gekomen. Hoe komt het dat deze ideeën nog niet zijn uitgevoerd of in ieder geval er nog maar een paar zijn uitgevoerd?

Already different stakeholders and groups have worked together, for instance on the Gebiedsvisie 2020, with lots of ideas and opportunities for the area. How comes that still none, or at least few, of them are executed?

Tourism

3. Er wordt verwacht dat de kwekers de komende twintig jaar het gebied zullen verlaten. Nu proberen sommige belanghebbenden in het gebied de economie een nieuwe impuls geven door. Hoe denkt u, als vertegenwoordiger van de stichting De Bovenlanden over zulke eigen initiatieven?

Breeders are assumed to leave the area within the next 20 years. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement. What do you, as a representative of De Bovenlanden think about these local initiatives?

Zou u meer toeristen willen zien in de regio (waarom (niet)?)?

Would you like to have more tourists in the region? Why (not)?

4. Bent u van mening dat de promotie van toerisme en vrijetijdsbesteding van dagrecreanten een geschikte manier is om bij te dragen aan een economische impuls voor Aalsmeer?

In your opinion, is the promotion of tourism and leisure an appropriate way to contribute to an economic impulse/development for the region.

zo ja: Kunt u een voorbeeld bedenken hoe toerisme en de ideeën van uw stichting goed samengaan?

If 4 = Yes: Can you think of an example of how tourists and your ideas of the region are combinable?

Zo niet: Onder welke voorwaarden zou u helpen/ bijdragen aan de promotie van toerisme in de regio van Aalsmeer?

If 4 = No: Under which circumstances would you support or contribute to promote tourism in the region?

5. Wat zijn de voor- en nadelen van de regio als toeristische bestemming, volgens u?

In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages the region has as a tourism destination?

6. Meer toerisme zou de natuur kunnen beschadigen of negatief beïnvloeden, maar mensen zouden ook meer geïnteresseerd kunnen raken in de natuur. Is het mogelijk dat toerisme en natuurbehoud kunnen samengaan in Aalsmeer?

Extra tourism in the area could damage the nature but people could also get more interested in the different natural values of the area. Can more tourism and preserving nature go hand in hand?

Landscape

7. Wat is karakteristiek aan het landschap van Aalsmeer, waarom is het uniek?

What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

7.2 Welke eigenschappen/karakteristieken van het landschap moeten beschermd worden? (betreffende toekomstige economische ontwikkelingen)

Which features of the landscape should be protected, (concerning future economic development)?

Branding

8. Wat maakt Aalsmeer anders dan andere gebieden/ regio's, waardoor toeristen naar Aalsmeer kunnen worden getrokken, bijvoorbeeld in historisch of traditioneel aspect?

What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/ traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

9. Waar denkt u dat de mensen uit Aalsmeer trots op zijn?

What do you think are people here in Aalsmeer are proud of (concerning the area)?

Communication and networks

10. Als vertegenwoordiger van stichting De Bovenlanden, zou u ons kunnen uitleggen met wat voor groepen en mensen u samenwerkt om de doelstelling/ visie van het gebied te bewerkstelligen?

As a representative of XXX could you explain us a bit, with what kind of groups or people you work together in order to achieve your ideas of the region?

11. We hebben gelezen dat de vereniging STUW een samenwerking is tussen de kwekers, Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie en Ons Aller Belang, deze samenwerking is bedoeld om met nieuwe plannen te komen. Weet u ook waarom Stichting De Bovenlanden niet is vertegenwoordigd in deze vereniging?

We have read about STUW, where breeders, Stichting Aalsmeer Westeinder Promotie and 'Ons Aller Belang' are working together on new plans. Why is Stichting De Bovenlanden not included?

11.2 Heeft uw vereniging regelmatig vergaderingen met andere belanghebbenden van andere organisaties en verenigingen in het gebied? (om dingen te bespreken) Waarom niet?

Do you have regular meetings with other representatives from other associations and organization from the area? (to discuss issues etc.)? Why not?

Others

12. Wat is uw toekomstvisie voor het gebied? Hoe wilt u dat het gebied er uit ziet of hoe het zich ontwikkelt in de toekomst?

What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

13. Zijn er verschillen in de toekomstvisies tussen uw stichting en de andere belanghebbenden over de ontwikkeling van het gebied?

Are there any differences between you and other stakeholders concerning the future vision of the development of the region?

Final Question

14. Heeft u nog een onderwerp waar u het nog graag over wil hebben maar dat u gemist heeft in het gesprek?

Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Hartelijk bedankt voor het interview meneer Borgman. Stoppen met opnemen

Thanks for the interview. Stop recording.

Leading Questions - Ons Aller Belang

Interview with Klaas Joren

Conducted on 21-11-2013 between 12:00 -12:45

Interviewers: Amber Visscher and Bram Wennekes

Language: Dutch

Introduction

Eigen introductie, uitleggen wat ACT is, onderzoeksdoel, Of de persoon anoniem wil blijven, BEGINNEN MET OPNEMEN. Dank u dat we u mogen interviewen.

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Zou u uzelf en de vereniging die u vertegenwoordigd willen introduceren? (wat is u doel, wie bent u etc)

Would you please briefly introduce the association / who you are / what you aim for etc.

2. Er zijn al samenwerkingen geweest tussen verschillende belanghebbenden en groepen, die geresulteerd hebben in bijvoorbeeld de Gebiedsvisie 2020. Daaruit zijn al vele ideeën en mogelijkheden naar voren gekomen. Hoe komt het dat deze ideeën nog niet zijn uitgevoerd of in ieder geval er nog maar een paar zijn uitgevoerd?

Already different stakeholders and groups have worked together, for instance on the Gebiedsvisie 2020, with lots of ideas and opportunities for the area. How comes that still none, or at least few, of them are executed?

Tourism

3. Er wordt verwacht dat de kwekers de komende twintig jaar het gebied zullen verlaten. Nu proberen sommige belanghebbenden in het gebied de economie een nieuwe impuls geven door. Hoe denkt u, als vertegenwoordiger van de vereniging Ons Aller Belang over zulke eigen initiatieven?

Breeders are assumed to leave the area within the next 20 years. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement. What do you, as a representative of Ons Aller Belang think about these local initiatives?

4. Zou u meer toeristen willen zien in de regio (waarom (niet)?)?

Would you like to have more tourists in the region? Why (not)?

5. Bent u van mening dat de promotie van toerisme en vrijetijdsbesteding van dagrecreanten een geschikte manier is om bij te dragen aan een economische impuls voor Aalsmeer?

In your opinion, is the promotion of tourism and leisure an appropriate way to contribute to an economic impulse/development for the region?

Zo ja: Kunt u een voorbeeld bedenken hoe toerisme en de ideeën van uw stichting goed samengaan?

If 4 = Yes: Can you think of an example of how tourists and your ideas of the region are combinable?

Zo niet: Onder welke voorwaarden zou u helpen/ bijdragen aan de promotie van toerisme in de regio van Aalsmeer?

If 4 = No: Under which circumstances would you support or contribute to promote tourism in the region?

6. Wat zijn de voor- en nadelen van de regio als toeristische bestemming, volgens u?

In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages the region has as a tourism destination?

7. Zijn er/ Zullen er lokale initiatieven zijn van de lokale bevolking voor het laten overnachten van toeristen? We dachten zelf aan bijvoorbeeld een bed and breakfast of slapen bij de boer.

Is there/Will there be any local initiatives by local people for housing tourists? We thought of bed and breakfast or sleeping at a farm.

8. Denkt u dat het verbeteren van de infrastructuur samen met het openbaar vervoer een grotere toeristenstroom oplevert?

Do you think improving the infrastructure together with the public transport will result in a larger amount of tourists?

8.2 Moet er ook rekening gehouden worden met waterwegen, als manier om Aalsmeer te bereiken?

Should waterways also be taken into account to reach Aalsmeer?

Landscape

9. Wat is karakteristiek aan het landschap van Aalsmeer, waarom is het uniek?

What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

Branding

10. Wat maakt Aalsmeer anders dan andere gebieden/ regio's, waardoor toeristen naar Aalsmeer kunnen worden getrokken, bijvoorbeeld in historisch of traditioneel aspect?

What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/ traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

11. Waar denkt u dat de mensen uit Aalsmeer trots op zijn?

What do you think are people here in Aalsmeer are proud of (concerning the area)?

Communication and networks

12. Als vertegenwoordiger van vereniging Ons Aller Belang, zou u ons kunnen uitleggen met wat voor groepen en mensen u samenwerkt om de doelstelling/ visie van het gebied te bewerkstelligen?

As a representative of XXX could you explain us a bit, with what kind of groups or people you work together in order to achieve your ideas of the region?

13. Heeft uw vereniging regelmatig vergaderingen met andere belanghebbenden van andere organisaties en verenigingen in het gebied? (om dingen te bespreken) Waarom niet?

Do you have regular meetings with other representatives from other associations and organization from the area? (to discuss issues etc.)? Why not?

Others

14. Wat is uw toekomstvisie voor het gebied? Hoe wilt u dat het gebied er uit ziet of hoe het zich ontwikkelt in de toekomst?

What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

15. Zijn er verschillen in de toekomstvisies tussen uw stichting en de andere belanghebbenden over de ontwikkeling van het gebied?

Are there any differences between you and other stakeholders concerning the future vision of the development of the region?

Final Question

16. Heeft u nog een onderwerp waar u het nog graag over wil hebben maar dat u gemist heeft in het gesprek?

Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Hartelijk bedankt voor het interview meneer Joren. Stoppen met opnemen

Thank for the interview. Stop recording.

Leading Questions - Municipality

Interview with Gert-Jan van der Hoeven

Conducted on 21-11-2013 between 13:10 - 14.15
Interviewers: Junhong Liu and Florian Neubauer
Language: English

Introduction

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Would you please briefly introduce the division you work in / who you are / what you aim for etc.
2. Already different stakeholders and groups have worked together, for instance on the Gebiedsvisie 2020, with lots of ideas and opportunities for the area. How comes that still none, or at least few, of them are executed?

Tourism

3. Breeders are assumed to leave the area within the next 20 years. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement. What do you, as a representative of the city council think about these local initiatives?

4. In your opinion, is the promotion of tourism and leisure an appropriate way to contribute to an economic impulse/development for the region.

Would you as the municipality of Aalsmeer like to have more tourists in the region? Why (not)?

What is the municipality of Aalsmeer planning to do in order to promote tourism and leisure activities in the region?

Where do you see currently the main problems in promoting or developing the region regarding tourism and leisure?

5. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages the region has as a tourism destination?

6. Too much tourism activities may exhaust the nature resource, do you have any idea or plan that can make sure the tourism will be developed in sustainable way? (here the sustainable means developing the economy on one hand, but protect the nature or historical resource on the other hand, so that the next generation will have same resource for developing)

7. What public service you still need to have or improve in this region (for example, better transportation infrastructure) for developing tourism and leisure in this region?

Landscape

8. What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

8.2 Which features of the landscape should be protected, (concerning future economic development)?

Branding

9. What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

10. What do you think are people here in Aalsmeer are proud of (concerning the area)?

Communication and networks

11. According to our impression, there are local initiatives and networks that try to promote tourism and leisure activities in the region. Is there any cooperation between the city council / municipality and local initiatives in order to promote tourism?

12. Are there outside networks or cooperation in order to develop and promote tourism and leisure in the area?

13. What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

Final Question

14. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Thank for the interview. Stop recording.

Leading Questions - Amsterdam Marketing

Interview with Anne Marie Dees

Conducted on 22-11-2013 between 14:45 - 15:30

Interviewers: Junhong Liu and Florian Neubauer

Language: English

Introduction

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Would you please briefly introduce the company and how you are related to the region of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer?

2. How are you, as Amsterdam marketing, involved in the touristic development in the region?

Tourism

3. Breeders are assumed to leave the area of Bovenlanden van Aalsmeer within the next 20 years. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement, by fostering leisure and tourism. How do you assess these efforts?

4. Are you promoting the area to Amsterdam tourists? If so, how?

5. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages the region has as a tourism destination?

6. Can you give examples of where you see obstacles in the region for further touristic development? (What is needed in your opinion for a more proper touristic and leisure development? Why do people seem to stay only for a night?) Public service, over night facilities,

7. If you compare the Aalsmeer region to other regions where you as a marketing company are engaged, do you see any region specific problems? Problems that especially occur in this region? (cooperation with municipality, lack of local initiative etc.)

Landscape

8. What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

Branding

9. What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

10. Is there - according to your knowledge - a certain regional branding strategy of the area?

Communication and networks

11. As a representative of Amsterdam marketing could you explain us a bit, with what kind of groups or people you work together in the region?

Others

12. What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

Final Question

13. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Thank for the interview. Stop recording.

Leading Questions - SAWP

Interview with Elsbeth Huis

Conducted on 27-11-2013 between 13:20 - 14.00

Interviewers: Florian Neubauer and Bram Wennekes

Language: English

Introduction

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Would you please briefly introduce the association / who you are / what you aim for etc.

2. Already different stakeholders and groups have worked together, for instance on the Gebiedsvisie 2020, with lots of ideas and opportunities for the area. How comes that still none, or at least few, of them are executed?

Tourism

3. Breeders are assumed to leave the area within the next 20 years. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement. What do you, as a representative of SAWP think about these local initiatives?

4. In your opinion, is the promotion of tourism and leisure an appropriate way to contribute to an economic impulse/development for the region?

Would you as the SAWP like to have more tourists in the region? Why (not)?

What is the SAWP planning to do or currently doing in order to promote tourism and leisure activities in the region?

Where do you see currently the main problems in promoting or developing the region regarding tourism and leisure?

5. In your opinion, what are the advantages of the region as a tourism destination? What are disadvantages?

6. In your opinion, do public services need to be developed in order to promote tourism? Waterways?

7. Where do you see potential for watersports and watersports companies in the area? (What there already is?)

8. Too many tourism activities may exhaust the nature. Do you have any idea or plan that can make sure the tourism will be developed in sustainable way? (here the sustainable means developing the economy on one hand, but protect the nature or historical resource on the other hand, so that the next generation will also have enough resource for developing)

Landscape

9. What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

9.2 Which features of the landscape should be protected, (concerning future economic development)?

Branding

10. What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

11. What do you think are people here in Aalsmeer are proud of (concerning the area)?

Communication and networks

12. Are there any (other) local initiatives and networks that try to promote tourism and leisure activities in the region.

Is there any cooperation between the city council / municipality and SAWP in order to promote tourism?

Are you cooperating with other local associations and organizations in order to promote and develop tourism and leisure activities? Do you meet regularly?

13. Are there outside networks or cooperation in order to develop and promote tourism and leisure in the area?

14. What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

Are there any differences between you and other stakeholders concerning the future vision of the development of the region?

Final Question

15. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Thank for the interview. Stop recording.

Leading Questions - Breeder

Interview with Mr. Hansen

Conducted on 27-11-2013 between 14:15 - 14.50

Interviewers: Florian Neubauer and Bram Wennekes

Language: English

Introduction

Own introduction, explain ACT, research aim, anonymization, START RECORDING. Thank for the interview.

1. Would you please briefly introduce who you are / what you aim for etc.
2. Already different stakeholders and groups have worked together, for instance on the Gebiedsvisie 2020, with lots of ideas and opportunities for the area. How comes that still none, or at least few, of them are executed?
3. Now some stakeholders in the region try to contribute to an economic improvement. What do you, as a breeder think about these local initiatives?

Breeders

4. Breeders are assumed to leave the area within the next 20 years. Why are they leaving? Are you planning to leave as well? Why (not)?
5. Are there any supportive initiatives or actions from other stakeholders who want to keep at least some breeders in the area?

6. Under which conditions would you continue breeding in the region?

Tourism

7. In your opinion, is the promotion of tourism and leisure an appropriate way to contribute to an economic impulse/development for the region.

8. In your opinion, how important is it to keep breeding activities in this region for attracting tourists?

8.1 If it is important, what do local government or stakeholders have to do in order to keep breeders/you staying in this business?

9. In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages the region has as a tourism destination?

10. What services you still need to have or improve in this region (for example, better transportation infrastructure) for developing tourism and leisure in this region?

Landscape

11. What do you think is characteristic for the landscape of Aalsmeer, why is it unique?

Branding

12. What do you think makes Aalsmeer distinguishable from other regions (historical/traditional)? (so that tourists are attracted to come to Aalsmeer?)

13. What do you think people here in Aalsmeer are proud of (concerning the area)?

Communication and networks

14. According to our impression, there are local initiatives and networks that try to promote tourism and leisure activities in the region. Is there any cooperation between these local initiatives and you as a breeder in order to promote tourism?

15. What is your vision of the area? How would you like to have the area look like or develop in the future?

Final Question

16. Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation? Anything of what you think, we forgot to talk about, that is worth mentioning?

Thank you for the interview. Stop recording.