CoP working in Greenport Venlo (NL) to develop sustainable regional development; from conflict to common interest.
Key theme: Civil society engagement: NGO, communities and citizenship

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Abstract
Greenport Venlo (NL) has experienced new strategies of sustainable regional development in order to create new output, projects and inspirations. The need of the National Government is to plan a new development of Greenport's (horticulture, food processing and logistics). The local need is to develop new economic clusters in a sustainable way and a regional policy to preserve the landscape and nature values. The Greenport projects focus on innovative and balanced spatial, organizational and mental solutions. Within a Community of Practice (CoP) new forms of participation, engagement and collaboration between governance, entrepreneurs, researchers and societal groups have been set up. This resulted in a regional strategy, new forms of regional management and new common projects. Creative techniques and knowledge exchange between participants have been tried out. The connection with existing structures seems to lead to a balanced development and a common direction. In the beginning, stakeholders of nature and environmental groups hesitate to participate, but are joining up the process now. In stead of defending a solitary interest, they discover to undergo a communality resulting in new solutions, which no partner could have developed on their own. Entrepreneurs developed new greenhouses and new clusters of food chain management in order to save costs on energy. Provincial and local government and other participants, who live in the area, are developing new landscapes, with attention to nature and landscape values. Social learning in CoP's, promises to be a realistic chance for nature and environmental groups to enhance sustainability.

This paper addresses the following aspects:
1.   Introduction
2.   The Greenport Venlo project goals and setting
3.   Steering models, the development in time
4.   Sustainability and environmental groups – development of organisation
5.   The project experiences
6.   What does it mean for sustainability in regional development
7.   Conclusions

1.   Introduction
This paper addresses the changing of organisations, the emergence of new partnerships, new ways of working and the new perspectives, creativeness, knowledge and meaning these changes generate. We use the case of the project Greenport Venlo in the Netherlands to illustrate the occurrence of a totally different way to develop innovative and sustainable goals in regional development by new partnerships.

According to Castells (1997), the social structure in the world is changing rapidly and radically, caused by the opportunities given by the information and communication technology. This gives rise to the network organisation, which cannot be managed by national governments. States lose their capacity to manage the economy. Politicians need to learn how to navigate within the new network structures. They have to try to create new relations between people, companies and institutes and they have to accept that the era of top-down steering a society has passed. Also Frissen (1998) outlines that all what existed before will change: our identity, our knowledge, our social relations and our institutes. This means that also politics, government and planning instruments will change. Furthermore, we see a development from representation of opinions by interest groups to representation of particular views. Policy scientists have emphasised that in order to maintain legitimacy, the government has to listen to these signals from society (Driessen, 1995).

These changes have led to profound changes in perspectives on steering society. Not only in theoretical frameworks, as the EU White-paper on Governance, but also in operational government of regional developments in the Netherlands, as well in the new Dutch legislation. The rhetoric of new steering instruments and methods is often accompanied by the promise of better and more sustainable results. The organisation op participants and partners for rural development changes from a Governmental initiative to a networked partnership of regional and local representatives and entrepreneurs that takes control of their own future activities and deliverables of the developing processes. The project Greenport Venlo is an outstanding example of this new way of working. Although the project is still in the early phases, a major shift in instrumental organisation, networked partnerships, development goals and perspectives and innovative solutions has been archived already. Alterra is an active playing partner in the project, both in a role of a more theoretical consultant as well as in a role of participating partner in development processes. This gives a good opportunity to study the processes to implement, redesign and innovate procedures and cooperative actions to meet the strategic goals of the project.

2.   The Greenport Venlo project goals and setting
Venlo is situated in the Southeast of the Netherlands and can be seen as a knit of infrastructure in the important commerce tracks towards Germany, which has lead to the development of a centre of distribution and logistics. This region can be characterized by large scale logistics, warehousing, transport, auction and commercial enterprises, mostly connected to the strong horticulture chain in the region.

The project area is located within the arms of the infrastructure at the edge of urban and rural area. In this area a large volume of new project development is planned, which consists of multi functional utilities. The region Noord-Limburg is one of the innovative development areas, focusing on agro-food. In the National Spatial Policy it is identified as a "Greenport" and many private and public-private projects are initiated.

In order to take the opportunity to realize a special and optimal outcome, this project can be seen as a common search process to new forms of integral project development, in which spatial, economic, social, cultural and ecological values get connected to and generate added value. It is imaginable that the challenge is very complex, because of its large scale, extreme integrality, amount of interest and meaning. To overcome this and to deal with complexity, the project *Streamlining Greenport Venlo* has been set up. The project builds upon various regional initiatives, aimed at strengthening the horticulture chain in the region. The objective is to strengthen and (re-)organise the societal structure of regional co-operation, which has been set up in former years with the Regiodialoog (regional dialogue) North Limburg and which now shows managerial problems because of the enormous spin off. New projects as *New Mixed Farming, New future perspective of horticulture, Planning Logistics, Innovation Centre of Healthy Food and InnovaTower* have recently been developed. It is the ambition and challenge of *Streamlining Greenport Venlo* to connect these projects to new regional ambitions as *Floriade 2012 and NV Noord Limburg,* and embed them in newly connected organizational, spatial and economical structures. For this, an innovative regional design (1) is needed, in which new insights of governmental and political organization and politics on spatial development (2), marketing and communication (3) and regional knowledge and data (4) will be implemented. The project is an experiment of a new knowledge alliances between different layers of government, entrepreneurs of the agro-food cluster, educational and research organisations and representatives of society and NGO' s. The method of CoP's (Communities of Practices) will be employed to make existing implicit knowledge explicit and introduce knowledge of external parties. Furthermore, competences to generate new knowledge will be developed.

Stakeholders in the area are organized in "Communities of Practice", aimed at the development of transdisciplinary knowledge and the development of competences. This ambition resulted in a specific goal for the development activities:

To build a common learning process with stakeholders in the area to handle the radical transformation from an area with a low spatial quality toward a high-quality urban landscape in which agriculture, food and logistics are optimally organised. The project aims at facilitating a sustainable development, which leads to:
- strengthening the economic position of the region by creating and adding value to new and existing products of regional companies
- improving the environmental quality of living- and working areas.

This article describes Greenport Venlo as a case-study of appliance of the principles of the CoP to regional development.

3.   Steering models, the development in time

In time a shift in instruments and methods of Governmental steering of regional developments can be seen. New steering techniques seem to be adopted to meet new demands on steering performance, old techniques seem to be used for purposes they were once developed for. In this way a complex mix of steering methods contributes to meet steering objectives in practice.

In order to understand the approach taken to developing the Greenport concept in the region Venlo we need to know more about underlying steering models and their change over time. Below three coexisting steering models are described.

3.1 *Hierarchical steering*

The blue-print planning of the object of steering links up with hierarchical instruments. These are top–down steering solutions: the government points out the desired development of the object, and communication to others is a consequence of the strategy chosen. Well-known instruments such as laws, bills and reports, regulations and control suit this way of working. The result of the hierarchical steering is defined in advance in targets and criteria.

3.2 *Interactive steering*

Participative and interactive steering link up with interactive instruments and working in network environments. Groups of participants work bottom–up to achieve a desired goal. The Dutch polder model is an example of a specialised way of working in this steering approach. Sometimes government joins in and develops its strategy while working in the group. The government communication to the other members and the outside world is concentrated on acceptance, public support of the domain policy and the progress made by the group

Government as well as interest groups, companies and citizens in the Netherlands are willing to work together to enlarge the participation of citizens and interest groups within politics (Driessen, 1995). In the nineties, in the Netherlands we have adapted our decision-making models in the direction of interactive planning. In the White Book on governance of the European Commission (EC, 2001) this kind of steering is mentioned as an important contribution to the implementing of EC politics. The result of the interactive steering is defined in terms of innovation and creativity.

In the Netherlands we see many experimental creative spatial planning and designing processes, in which new creative techniques are tried out. Also new disciplines and new forms of knowledge, and even artists, participate. However, the step to implementation and realisation is hard to make, because of resistance of the inhabitants, of the politicians or of the financial and juridical restrictions (Kersten, 2001). Tuning with non-participants, investors, and politicians often fails.

3.3 *Conditional steering*

When individual persons or isolated institutions become the centre of developments and the government is neither directly involved in the development itself nor participates in that development, conditional steering provides the key to reach desired outcomes. It depends on self-regulating systems, which exist outside the realm of influence of hierarchical or participatory steering. It stimulates the conditions under which persons volunteer to operate to a certain result area without relinquishing their freedom to make their own personal choice about the extent of their performance. The government gives the general outlines of the development area, queries the results and enquires about the desired progress of implementation. The subjects are expected to accept the given conditions and perform within their boundaries. The search for these constraints is the reason for inevitably contact-moments and develops choices on structure for object and process. The communication is often on a personal basis. It influences the partners in a process to distinct role models and a range of operations. The result of conditional steering is defined in terms of engagement and belief in the development.

To fulfil their collective task the government has to manage and steer the interactions with and within the society more directly. Utilising and optimising the imagination, the intellectual capacity of the social capital and the sense of responsibility becomes the main purpose of governmental management. The government has to invest in the innovative competence of the society and in empowerment.

3.4   Steering by CoP's
When individual persons or institutions want to join up in a common development or change process, they use a form of social organisation often referred to as a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). A CoP can function as an instrument in governmental steering, when the authorities take the initiative to create and manage a CoP as an instrument op policy-making. In the start-up phase an invitation to begin a CoP in light of the given conditions will sometimes prove to be an excellent way to stimulate performance without direct participation. When a CoP starts up under such conditions it soon becomes clear whether the participants are willing to accept the given conditions. Knowledge, experience, imagination and emotion of the participants are very important and can lead not only to support for the decision makers, but also to surprisingly innovative solutions (Nonaka and Takeuchi 2000).

Facilitating learning and inspiring social growing processes, is the main objective for the management of CoP's. Working together, sharing and especially **common** social learning and transformation processes are seen as key factors. Only in social settings, individuals come to insight, innovations and new **identities** that define the existence of the organisation (Wenger, 1998).

Essential within the concept of the CoP is the fundamental exchange of knowledge, know-how and **meaning** between members, which leads to a higher level of insight. On this stage problems can be overcome and renewal can be realised (Regeer and Bunders, 2003). The **practice** is directed to interdisciplinarity, creativity and innovation. Many examples show that social learning processes can be very stimulating and motivating. However, some clear working conditions need to be established in order to support social learning processes in CoP's. (Wenger, 1998)

Wenger gives only a few conditions for starting a CoP, by presenting the learning infrastructure. Design of a CoP has to be minimal and opportunistic. A CoP must be seen as a common enterprise. Innovation does not take place on schedule. You can't plan a CoP on a spreadsheet. It takes experimentation, risk and time to create. (Kranendonk 2002) In the Netherlands, the use of conditional steering by CoP techniques is in its midterm stages. Several CoPs have been started, some with the desired result, others crashed during the processes. In Venlo, it was chosen to experiment with the working of a CoP, as a challenge to meet new demands of project development in a very complex and dynamic environment.

3.5.   New steering perspectives
The changes in steering techniques show a shift from the concept of 'making plans happen' to the concept of 'social learning about reaching desired changes'. It is a change from "Government knows best for you" to local empowerment and initiative on the basis of personal engagement with the goals of change. A shift from an organization-based authority to a partnership of acting people. This perspective entails a further change: the processes change from negotiations to co-creation. The role of government

changes further from the keeper of authority to a learning partner in innovative processes, resulting in a learning region. These changes can be seen also in a European perspective (Hubner, 2006).

4.   Sustainability and environmental groups – development of organisation in time
As one of the objectives of the project *Streamlining Greenport Venlo* is to improve environmental quality and contribute to a sustainable regional development strategy, we need to consider the (potential) role of environmental groups. We start by giving an overview of the history of environmental NGOs in the Netherlands in phases of development.

The organisation in the Netherlands of organisations on environmental sustainability and nature conservation goes back to the second half of the 19th century. Around the turn of the century the first Verenigingen (Associations) were founded on nature conservation, protection of birds and nature education. The Verenigingen were non-political and elitist and focussed on the safeguarding of nature. They had practically no goals in influencing governmental policy making. Important issues were biodiversity and stewardship. In this period human activities were seen as responsible for Nature degradation, but not necessary as a part of the environment. Growing awareness changes this perspective in the middle of last century, and human activity is seen as an essential part of all ecosystems. This changes the role of the organisations. The environmental organisations emerge only in the beginning of the seventies. Based on new books as Silent Spring (Rachel Carson, 1962), The Population Bomb (Ehrlich, 1968), Limits to growth (Club of Rome, 1972) people start to organise their concern: the care of the polluted habitats is central theme in different new organisations. Sustainable development becomes the central goal. Society is seen as a part of the (even chemical) cycle of Nature. To restore the sustainability of society, a lot of policy changes are needed. The new organisations were at start still very elite (with only twelve members, all professors), but soon after publishing their first articles, they became much more grass rooted. (8000 members in 1972 Milieudefensie –organisation)

The new emerging environment movement felt a close harmony with other organisations for policy changes. New strategies for development of the total society were advocated. Big social actions and demonstrations were used as instruments to change the policy of government, seen as the responsible organisation for all that was going wrong. The seventies were the phase of alarm and awareness of the environment-movement. The eighties were the time of confrontation and polarisation. Large actions against nuclear plants and armament, the disruption in the ozonosphere, acid rain and the devastation of the rain forest became major issues. The movement chose actions and demonstrations as instruments to change public opinions and often collided with governmental policy making. Militant groups emerged and violent confrontations between environmentalists and police characterised this period.

The scope of problems and strategic policy design within the environmental movement led to further professionalizing of expertise, communication techniques and strengthening (local) membership of the Associations. In stead of simply being opposed to governmental authority, new participative initiatives started experimenting as a counter movement to the more militant professional activists and their methods. The growing awareness in society to deal with sustainability resulted in the need to work on strategic goals and results. The trust of the people in the organizations reached a record; large member numbers were a base for specialisation and the rise of professional working

agencies participating in governmental processes. The nineties were the time for new subjects like globalisation, climate, air traffic and other issues that were difficult to translate in local issues. In the policy-arena environment was seen as a risk-item and was given less attention in policy statements of the different parties. Environment was gradually left to the market in the neo-liberal governmental policy. The communication campaign was: a healthy environment starts by your own behaviour. The government was not the central player on sustainability anymore. The organisations in the environment movement changed their policy again from collaborating with government, based on the representative support of large member groups, to a broad and open partner organisation. The need to create new networks of responsibility both on the conservation as well on the sustainability aspects led to new networking efforts to gain results. Participation of business partners, new agricultural and rural development approaches and new global organisations led to a shift in activities and outcomes of the movement. Discussions on the Third World issues, the Climate changes and CO2 emission and the role NGOs play in global issues is the challenge in the next years.

The environmental organisations have rapidly changed their ways of working the last 50 years. They first applied to the governmental rules of engagement, then resisted and protested and now deciding more and more on working on their own behalf with partners and representatives who matter to the subject and goals of actions. Also the sense of urgency has changed. From predicting imminent disaster to long term policy changes was a shift difficult to communicate to the public. Results of policy changes have had a profound impact on the quality of environment. The feeling is now that the environment movement is in a phase of exaggeration, making overstatements. The goals and perspectives of the organisations will change under this pressure again, obtaining new ways of working.

So, in new ways of working, the role of and the relations between the establishments will change, also for the institutionalised environmental groups. In the Netherlands, we see due to the changes in the past decennia (from regulation to system innovations and reframing, Grin 2003), a process of search and change in the world of environmental groups. The appliance and the internalisation of a network strategy in the present structures, might be a suitable strategy in the aspiration for sustainability. The question is which roles the local and national NGO's will be able to play within those network development? And, to what extend is this network going to be a NGO at itself, with a new kind of backing, representatives, goals and ways of working? And witch organisation will define sustainability to the full extend in the project; environmental organisations or the new emerging partners in the project such as SMEs.

In de context of the project Streamlining Greenport Venlo this development is being monitored and this academic discussion did arise. In the scientific discourse on *civil society*, ngo's, public administration and the market.

5.   Project experiences

The Venlo Greenport case is an example of regional project development where new ways of working are practiced. After a series of workshops and discussions on the approach of the need for an new planning system for regional development, a choice was made to start this process based on new perceptions in planning and steering methods.

5.1.   New ways of working promises high quality results, experiences in Greenport Venlo
The new idea behind the efforts to organise the project-development in a totally different way, was shared by a lot of (potential) participants. In government, as well as entrepreneurs and other participants an underlying understanding was imminent, that the choice for a traditional method to develop this region would not lead to the desired quality of landscape design in combination with the development of economic activities. As a result partners choose for a new way of working, not knowing in detail what this approach would lead to. Partners are developing in meetings of the CoP their natural way of working, dividing tasks and responsibilities and gradually designing methods of working, the spatial lay out of the project and the different activities that are going to be developed in the project area.

The first phase of the project focused on a reconnaissance of structures, interests and potential partners and initiated a CoP in which government officials, entrepreneurs and knowledge institutes participated. In this second phase this network will be broadened with new partners from societal organizations. Furthermore, a marketing strategy will be developed, regional knowledge management will be organized and spatial scenarios will be designed. The process will be monitored by an external reflector

De Venlo CoP has its own characteristics:
- open platform-structure. Members can (to a certain extend) enter or leave. Sometimes due to specialisation (daughter CoPs), sometimes because of lack of interest in some necessary process stages to be performed in the project
- open network function. Members act on behalf of their formal organisation. So both technical as governments decisions meet in the CoP meeting. Both administrative, entrepreneur and democratic elected officials are present in the different CoP stages
- low theory driven activities, choice for mutual influencing (social learning at work)
- complexity of interdependent and chained development schemes contribute to the discussion, making decision making a challenge
- long intervals between open and closed working stages. Within the closed meetings, appointments and work-packages to deal with in the formal organisations are decided upon.
- need for synchronisation at the beginning of a new CoP session, due to the working-structure

Taken into account the valuable experiences from the first phase, the high dynamics and involvement in the area, it can be expected that the second phase will make an important contribution to the goals of transitions into a sustainable regional development of the horticulture-chain and the integrated project.

- New methods for the development of competences and knowledge of the stakeholders which are involved;
- A strong contribution to the fundamental process of change (transition) which takes place in the area;

5.2.   New organisation in CoP working
The search for new forms governmental and spatial planning processes, towards a "Spatial development policy". This can be illustrated in the organization diagram.
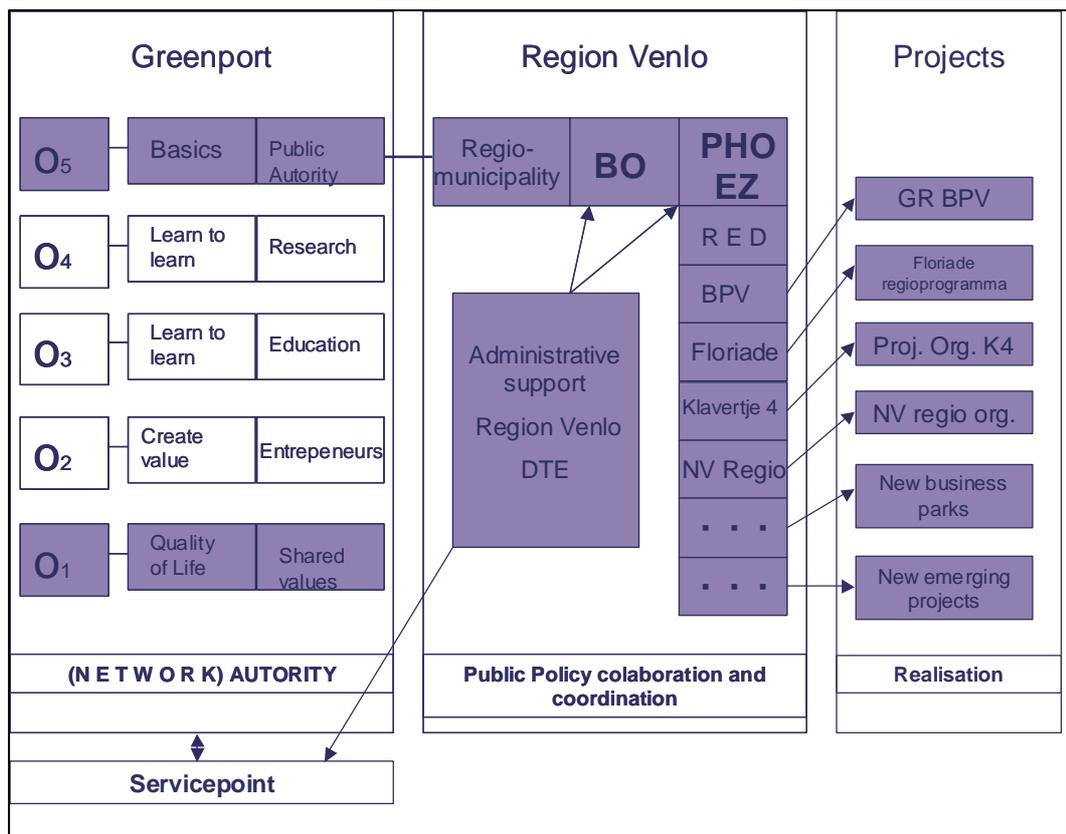
Developing knowledge and competences in a "Mode 2" approach, in which all stakeholders and knowledge institutes work together in CoP' s, is new and can only be stimulated an facilitated by an external party which brings together various partners and knowledge institutes. The common search for a new governmental practice and planning methods requires an independent and powerful stimulus from outside the area.

5.3   Shifts in the way of working, project development in practice
The monitoring of the project-processes show a variety on new approaches and ways of working in practice:

- A new balanced development and a common direction
    - from a traditional sectoral way of working (just a new business area) to a project on regional development
    - the ambition to include landscape en environmental issues in the development schemes
    - large discussions between partners, stakeholders and public on the strategic approach and direction of the development
    - the urgency to plan and organise the development process in an innovative and sustainable way.
    - The adoption of CoP working

The project is not seen as the development of a logistic business park, simply a tourist attraction/event or a concentration area for horticulture. Partners are scouting innovative connections between these economic functions to improve the quality and sustainability of the regional planning process.

- participation of partners and joining up in the process
  - new forms of regional planning discussed
  - choice to an open and transparent planning method
  - inviting partners and scout their ability and willingness to participate in an experimental approach of the project
  - founding fathers, large group of interested partners, incoming laggards
  - Other activities and presentations with partners towards large network

Also the new partners are willing to participate in tasks (both on strategic decisions as on design and development), formally dedicated to a single other authority. So SME-partners are into sustainable entrepreneurship.

- from defending a solitary interest to sharing new solutions
  - cross economical activities, chaining of commercial services and new product development
  - Tourism activities, landscape quality, crowd management and on-site logistic design
  - horticultural innovations and market response

A shift from bounded negotiations to creative partnership lead to new insight for innovative project development. In this way educational activities become a substantial part of the operational management of the regional area.

- New design-methods of products, services and area management
  - the role of knowledge on logistics, horticultural an tourism development interlinked.
  - the KnowHouse concept
  - The Masters concept in the CoP

Functions essential to the maintenance and management of the complex are created from the very beginning of the development scheme.

- Experimenting in cooperation and collaboration
  - Readjust governmental authority to regional governance
  - contribute in the design phase of interlinked knowledge and innovative strategies
  - reinvent mutual advances of economies of scale and vicinity
  - develop business in a sustainable landscape environment of high quality

The understanding, that every partner is changing its traditional role and authority gives way for really new ways of thinking and decision making.

5.4   Changing of roles, new responsibilities and creative partnerships

Regional government

The provincial and the local government used to execute national policy, to implement rules and regulation and check and control citizens and companies in their (spatial) behaviour. These tasks can be seen as the vertical tradition of steering society (WRR, 2006). In the regional innovation process in Greenport Venlo new functions and roles are developing due to decentralisation. In stead of testing and controlling, the government is more and more focused on stimulating and facilitating regional processes with other participants. This can be seen as horizontal dimension. They are learning how

they can contribute to this and they meet new challenges and demands. This is not easy and can be seen as a shift of culture. Many civil servants as well counsellors are struggling how to connect the vertical and horizontal dimensions within processes of regional development.

Research

Also role of research is changing. Alterra as part of Wageningen University and Research institute plays an active role in the project development. First this institute researches the emerging project development and the activities of partners, secondly the researcher develop and design a method of working and thirdly the researchers are in the project as acting partner, contributing to de CoP activities, partly in a role as knowledge provider, partly in a role stimulating the partners to new steps in the development.

It's interesting how the participative role and the contribution with knowledge and know-how are to the unique process in which partners are commonly finding out how the methods are developing. On the one moment research has a traditional role of delivering scientific knowledge, on the other moment; research is just one of the participating partners and has to anticipate on movements and dynamics in the regional network. This is never a standard procedure or process. The contribution of knowledge, experiences, ambitions and culture all participants together works out principal discussions and strategy development and at the end in new applied methods.

Researchers of the Free University of Amsterdam are monitoring the activities that lead to the physical and organisational project development. The main research question concerning the facilitation of the transition process is the transition from "mode 1" to "mode 2" processes, in which new ways of producing knowledge, new management and policy approaches are the central topic. This requires new competences, dealing with "mode 2" ambitions in a "mode 1" reality and new strategies for social groups, for example environmental NGO's, and new communication methods.

Transforum

The National Government sets up temporal project organizations to stimulate innovation. Transforum has been set up to experiment with innovative approaches. The Netherlands has a strong agro-food sector. The post-war development of knowledge was directed towards high-productivity agriculture. While this approach was successful, it is now leading to overspecialisation, environmental pressures and encroachment on public spaces. The agro-food sector is running into ecological and social barriers; a switch to sustainable production and liveable rural areas is badly required. At the same time, the Netherlands must continue to hold its own against international competition. This calls for new alliances between entrepreneurs and researchers. TransForum brings such alliances about. In this way a new knowledge network is established that satisfies two requirements:

- o close partnership between research and practice
- o co-operation among divergent disciplines to come up with integrated practical solutions.

The new organizations referred to as 'knowledge alliances' turn out to be hybrid structures. These organizations are created with the intention of leveraging the benefits provided by bringing together partners from different sectors - including the market, government and knowledge institutes - and applying innovative working methods and instruments with a focus on knowledge development. KnowHouse is in the Region of Venlo such a new player, who has catered to those new developments, with a specialization on agriculture and rural development. This organization is well suited to initiate regional innovations and facilitate the processes. But, for the existing intermediate organizations, the role and position of KnowHouse sometimes is seen as a threat, but also as a motivator for them to adapt their strategies.

6. *What does it mean for sustainability in regional development?*

6.1 *New common definitions of sustainability*
Entrepreneurs, (both local and provincial) governments and societal organisations are brought together to develop knowledge and create a high-quality urbanised landscape. In this way, a mutual social basis, understanding and new insights will be developed. Within the CoP people create new common identities. Participants live in this area and feel connected with the environment. So they care about the quality of life. The project will result in a Regional Design as an example in the discussions about urban-rural relations. Sustainability, accessibility, beauty and quality are leading principles. The hypothesis is that an environment which is attractive to live in, to work in or to visit, is a prerequisite for attracting innovative companies, employees and visitors. Furthermore, for the horticulture sector as well energy as space can be described in costs. To keep a strong market position this sector is very eager to find savings.

The Greenport concept, which was invented in national policy, will be elaborated for a region by projects, designs and an (international) network which will form an important contribution to the Dutch horticulture sector.

6.2 *New roles for environmental groups?*
Unexpected outcomes lead to hesitation in the environmental issue groups, especially on the local and regional level of Greenport Venlo. We have seen shifts in governance which tend to cause a loss of responsiveness of traditional intermediary institutions and organizations as environmental groups. In new ways of working and in the new era of conditional steering and CoP's, also new institutional reconstruction design is needed (Kersbergen et al, 2004). In what direction will environmental groups re-organise?

As Jasanoff (1997) describes, the place of NGOs in governance is changing in the context of changing environmental policy processes. In the Dutch context the changing policy context is described by Grin as environmental policy as regulation to environmental policy to system innovation. The implications for the (potential) role of environmental NGOs in new steering models deserve ample attention. Considering the different ways in which NGOs create knowledge-action links according to Jasanoff may lead to the question to what extent CoPs with a sustainable development goal actually become the environmental NGO for the future? The functions that Jasanoff distinguishes are:

- NGOs as critics of accepted frameworks of environmental knowledge and regulatory policy.
- NGOs as creators of more inclusive 'epistemic networks' around nationally or internationally defined environmental objectives (ability to bridge lay-expert, activist-professional, local-global divides)
- NGOs as disseminators of information and enabling technology transfer (included. monitoring and enforcement)

Based on the experiences in CoP Greenport Venlo we see the second function of the NGO's as the future role. They should participate in complex problems and regional practice with their knowledge and aspirations and together with the other participants search for suitable regional solutions. So we see a development from stakeholder to participant.

Also the third distinguished function can be a future role, only when the NGO's succeed in the appliance of Mode-2 forms of communication, directed to innovative solutions and engage other people.

In the next period we will monitor the future development of environmental groups and the ways in which sustainability is implemented in regional development of Greenport Venlo.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Shifts due to complexity

Just a year after the start of the project a lot of activities have been developed in a totally different way then done before in traditional project development of an agri logistical business area. Research and monitoring have to be continued in the next 5-10 years to investigate the sustainable results in the emerging project. The presence of hard dead-lines (such as the Floriade-year, the need to reorganise the auction, the pressure on the food-processing industry and the need for more space for greenhouses and horticulture) are of great importance in the urgency to meet new phases in the CoP work. There is no safe or theoretical development space to experiment the desired new ways of working. The urgency and pressure on the development scheme gives all participants and stakeholders the shared experience that their contribution to the process is needed. Discussions are not always easy, roles have to be reinvented again (especially demanding for governmental representatives) and the rising complexity in the first phases of the project sometimes lead to disappear. But all participants have the feeling to continue this method and still share their ambitions, even stager them during the participation in the CoP activities. Soon the first physical and spatial engineering activities of the development process will be started. Then we will see how the process of social learning has lead to new chances for environmental design and development.

Many initiators focus on technology-driven inventions (hard-ware), whereas system-innovation should also focus on societal and market issues, the orgware. In order to support a successful regional development, on-going and new initiatives should be embedded in their societal context within the region and influencing processes outside the region.

7.2 Shifts in case-development

The Venlo case shows a large group of people, institutions, SMEs and local authorities experimenting new ways of working. They experience difficulties and problems. Sometimes related with the need to loosen the traditional roles in development processes. Government has no absolute authority to decide the planning schemes. Entrepreneurs have to deal with sustainability solutions. Educational institutions have to adjust the teaching programmes to regional project development. The agricultural sector is experimenting to chain up their production with the food-industry and marketing activities. All these activities result in a planning process, that is totally different from any experience before for all partners. The strategic start to work in this way now reflects on the operational level. The enlargement for existing horticulture farms in the region shows a new appearance of techniques on glass-warehousing. The way developers are dealing with the landscape quality shows a willingness to generate added value from the local environment by high quality design and management of the nature area, that is included in the project. Entrepreneurs, even in close competition witch each other have organised themselves to manage mutual interests. And slowly other possible partners (such as the environmental movement organisations) are expressing their interest to join up in the process.

Special interest in the future research and monitoring of the project is on the practical development of a regional identity, that will reach out of the project. The spin-off to the Provincie and even to a wider region including large parts of Germany is now a focus in the communication of the project. The shift from the traditional fame of the region as an industrial landscape to a area of high quality and sustainability is a challenge to be met. Not only for social or psychological reasons. More sustainable production in glass horticulture will result in lower production costs. Gas-prices make up 50% of production costs of tomatoes. If the region succeeds in more sustainable chaining of productions, this will also lead to economic benefits, a promise that functions as a strong drive behind the experimental development process.

7.3 Future shifts - new ecologies of learning

Conditional steering fits into principles such as self-organization and new ecologies of learning (Snowden, 2002). It separates the management of context from content: beyond tacit and explicit development of knowledge. It changes the role of narrative databases in natural learning and enables cross-cultural knowledge to be exchanged through perspective shift. Snowden's principles of 'organic knowledge management' are a form of conditional steering which focuses on using the natural contours of the organization to allow knowledge to self-organize and self-manage, minimizing formal structures and thus saving costs, improving effectiveness and reducing time to deployment of KM solutions and applying complexity theory to organizational decision making.

All these shifts show a special case emerging in the Venlo region. In the next years to come we will see if these promising experiments will deliver. And to what extend they will strengthen the discourse on new methods of steering regional development and sustainability.

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