

Visitor Management in Regional Governance of Tourism and Recreation



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Visitor Management in Regional Governance of Tourism and Recreation

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After finishing the lectures of the master study programme (MSc) “Landscape architecture and Planning” at Wageningen University the Netherlands, I was expected to write a final thesis to complete the master programme. Since my interest goes to leisure and spatial planning, I have researched the formulation and implementation of visitor management policies in the region “Het Groene Woud”, in order to give clarity about the implementation barriers of visitor management policies. This research could become possible due to the great contribution of supervision from Wageningen University as well as support from practice. I especially want to thank my supervisor Raoul Beunen, who supported me during the process. I appreciate his time and critical constructive feedback. In addition I will thank Gerrit-Jan Carsjens for its feedback. I learned much about applying a research, but even more from the technical writing aspects of a thesis. Besides the supervisor, I also would like to thank the interviewees. They provided me practical information and gave me new insights in cooperation structures and responsibilities of actors within the field of visitor management. A special thanks goes to; Toon Loonen, Leo Beckers, Johan van Cuijck, Trees Zwaans and Ewout Sanders. In addition, I would like to thank my fellow students with whom I have had discussions about different related subjects.

Thank you and enjoy reading!

Yours sincerely,

Martijn van den Aker

Abstract

The popularity of outdoor recreation has led to a growing number of visitors in national parks, nature areas or other touristic places, which results in an increasing pressure on ecosystems at parks but also at a regional level. Conservationists indicate that measures such as signage to disperse and control visitor flows (visitor management) at regional level are not sufficiently implemented, due to several barriers. These measures are important to achieve a sustainable balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation quality. There is much knowledge about visitor management at park level (in recreation or national parks). However, there is only a little knowledge on the development and implementation of visitor management at a regional level. Therefore this research has focused on visitor management at a regional level. For this study the region “Het Groene Woud” has been selected as a case-study. In regional governance of “Het Groene Woud” diverse actors are involved in formulation and implementation of policies. These actors are united in platforms, which are joint in a regional council. The cooperation between actors has resulted in a general vision for the region, however the implementation of measures regulating visitors are stagnated. The established policies focus mainly on “identity” in order to attract visitors. However, identity can be interpreted in different ways, which returns and acts as barrier in policy implementation. The difficult implementation has mainly to do with a lack of coordination of perspectives and exchange of knowledge between actors. Dominant perspectives in formulation of policies do play a crucial role in the policy process in “Het Groene Woud”. Fortunately, actors agree on the imperfections and aim to work on better cooperation. This study identified several barriers: insufficient knowledge about the use of space by visitors, which affects that the spatial consequences of plans are unclear, unclear overview in what actors want (visions and plans), lack of overview in cooperation and responsibilities between clusters and actors in which it becomes difficult to point an initiator. Due to the barriers it is increasingly difficult to get clear what actors want, how they want to achieve their goal and who is taking initiative, which influences implementation.

Summary

This report presents the results of a study towards the formulation and implementation of visitor management policies in the region “Het Groene Woud”. The underlying reason of the study is the annually increasing number of visitors in National park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen”, which results in an increasing pressure on ecosystems and recreation qualities at, park level but also at a regional level. Tourism infrastructure (in and around the park) are used intensively at popular places and crowded days. Conservationists indicate that measures to control visitor flows at a regional level are not sufficiently implemented, while these measures are important to achieve a sustainable balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation.

Different actors such as public organisations, conservationists and entrepreneurs in the leisure sector are involved in formulation and implementation of policies each with a specific role, perspective, interest and goal. They cooperate and negotiate to reshape and institutionalize perspectives in order to develop tourism and recreation in the region. An example of a policy is to strengthen the image of the region by designate a general name. The framed research questions are “which aspects influence the formulation and realisation of visitor management, which barriers can be distinguished here and what are the social-spatial consequences of these barriers? Insights in perspectives of involved actors, their cooperation, established regional policies as well as the spatial consequences of these policies is needed to answer these questions. Within the analysis, the following methods actor analysis, policy analysis, field observations, interviews and document-study have been used.

The literature review was conducted to get insights in visitor management and formulation and implementation of policies. The literature review showed that there is many knowledge on visitor management at park level (in recreation or national parks). However, there is only a little knowledge about visitor management at a regional level. The study focused on gaining insights of visitor management at a regional level. In order to guide the research, the following five components, respectively, “signalling”, “inform”, “navigate”, “concentrate” and “accommodate” are central during the study. Drawing upon the different components of visitor management are study perspectives of actors and which perspectives are translated into policies and actions in the region. The actor analysis is used to get insights in actors, cooperation, roles, perspectives and interest. There are several organizations and platforms that play a role in the spatial planning of the region. There can be stated that there are differences between perspectives of actors such as develop (leisure cluster) or conserve (nature- and landscape). It became clear that this difference influence implementation of policies such as differences in signage. To get insight in visitor management in the region and the different visions and plans of involved actors, interviews have been conducted and policy documents have been analysed. The policy analysis shows that actors in this region (“Het Groene Woud”) give much attention to the image of the region. According to the policy analysis can be stated that there is a broad agreement on strengthening/reshape the identity of the region, increase visitors numbers and optimize collaboration between actors. This has led to a general vision for the region. There is no problem in the formulation of a general vision for the region, however the implementation of established policies seems to be stagnated. At park level several measures are implemented to control visitors. However, ideas, approaches for the realisation of plans differ among actors. Stated by the alliance broker of the region (interview): *“within the park rises the risk of an overkill of information”*. Also stated by the nature manager (interview): *“the park Loonse and Drunense Duinen*

occur an abundance of uncontrolled signage, which will lead to confusion and does not contribute to our image". There can be concluded that this difference does not benefit to the image of the region.

The analysis shows that several barriers influence the implementation of visitor management related measures. These barriers are: lack of knowledge about the use of space, lack of knowledge about spatial consequences of plans, lack of knowledge about visions and plans of actors, lack of overview in cooperation and responsibilities between actors. The barriers can be explained by a lack of coordination of perspectives. An example of a widely supported ambition is to "increase visitors numbers", however actors do not mention the spatial consequences of this ambition. This phenomenon is attributable to a lack of knowledge about the use of space, since nature managers mention that visitor trends in "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen" are unclear. The alignment of perspectives is complicated since actors have different ideas and approaches about the realisation of plans. An example of different perspectives is the uncertainty about which name should be used for the different sub-areas in the region. The regional council "Het Groene Woud" advocates a general house style, while the overall cooperation of the leisure sector advocates awareness of a sub-area "Leisure Boulevard" located in "Het Groene Woud". This difference between perspectives led to dissimilar ways of promoting areas, located within the region. This is demonstrated, for example, by the use of names or stories about the history of the area or region. This does not benefit to the image of the region. There is also a lack of overview in cooperation structures whereby responsibilities became unclear manifested in the fact that actors does not know who does what? (interview, nature manager). Due to the barriers it is increasingly difficult to get clear what actors want (visions), how they want it (implementation plans) and who is taking initiative (cooperation and responsibilities).

In order to get more attention for visitor management in regional policy-making, it is important to give the term visitor management in regional perspective clarity and importance among actors and minimize the appointed barriers. The coordination of perspectives of actors in regional governance could be better. Platforms arise, however, perspectives are completely different. It is therefore important to align these main perspectives. This can be achieved by obtaining a clear overview of cooperation structures of actors, whereby perspectives, visions and plans of actors come forward, which can be compared with each other. It will contribute to the cooperation of knowledge of actors as well as alignment of visions and plans of actors. An example is to find agreement between different perspectives such as the use of a common name. Agree on the difference in perspectives and stop with the use of buzzword (abstract concepts). The main advice is to formulate policies clearly and understandable and executable. It is important that actors agree on a policy and that all actors interpret the policy correctly. This decrease the chance of disagreement afterwards which influence implementation. Before setting up a visitor management plan for the region, it is important to get clear the visitor flows, trends and capacity of the various attractive places in the region, the current tourism infrastructure and environmental problems. The "Policy and Implementation Agenda leisure economy 2013-2020" could serve as a basis.

Samenvatting

Voor het afronden van de MSc Landgebruiksplanning is een onderzoek uitgevoerd dat zich heeft gericht op het verkrijgen van inzichten in het formuleren en implementeren van beleid betreffende bezoekers management. De aanleiding van het onderzoek is het jaarlijks groeiende aantal bezoekers in recreatie en natuur parken, waardoor er een steeds grotere druk op infrastructuur en ecosystemen komt te liggen. Natuurbeheerders geven aan dat ruimtelijke doelen zoals het versterken van landschapswaarden en interventies in relatie tot het sturen van bezoekers (bezoekersmanagement) niet tot uitvoering worden gebracht, terwijl deze van belang zijn voor het realiseren van een duurzame balans tussen natuurbehoud en toerisme en recreatie van de regio. Daarmee komt de recreatie kwaliteit (uniekheid, faciliteiten) waarvoor bezoekers naar het gebied komen onder druk te staan. Bij dit vraagstuk zijn verschillende actoren betrokken, ieder met een eigen rol en doelen. Via een regionaal beleid en het realiseren van maatregelen probeert men gezamenlijk te werken aan de toekomst van het gebied en het ontwikkelen van toerisme en recreatie. Een voorbeeld is dat men gezamenlijk inzet op het versterken van het imago van de regio zoals het in gebruik nemen van een huisstijl waardoor er een samenhangend geheel wordt gerealiseerd. Echter de hiertoe gerelateerde maatregelen zijn vaak niet uitgevoerd. Dit onderzoek gaat verder in op de implementatiebarrières. Het doel van het onderzoek is om meer inzicht te krijgen in barrières die betrekking hebben op het formuleren en implementeren van bezoekersmanagement beleid. Voor dit onderzoek is een specifieke casestudy, regio “Het Groene Woud” geselecteerd omdat deze regio de hierboven genoemde problemen ondervindt. De voortvloeiende vraag is: “welke aspecten zijn belangrijk in beleidsformulatie en implementatie van bezoekers management en hoe beïnvloeden deze aspecten het proces”? Om antwoord te kunnen geven op deze vraag is er kennis nodig over het regionaal beleid en het vormen hiervan, maar ook de ruimtelijke vertaalslag oftewel beleidsimplementatie. Er is expliciet gekeken naar hiaten in beleid, verschil in perspectieven en plannen. Vervolgens is gekeken hoe dit beleid ruimtelijk wordt geconceptualiseerd. Binnen deze analyse zijn de volgende methodes ingezet voor het verzamelen en analyseren van data: “interviews”, “veldwaarnemingen” en “document-studie”. De literatuurstudie diende om inzicht te krijgen over bezoekersmanagement en het vormen en implementeren van beleid. Tijdens de literatuurstudie werd duidelijk dat er voldoende kennis is over bezoekersmanagement op park niveau, echter is er weinig kennis is over bezoekersmanagement op regionaal niveau. De volgende componenten van bezoekersmanagement stonden centraal en dienden als leidraad tijdens de studie: “signaleren”, “informer”, “navigeren”, “concentreren” en “accommoderen”. Daarnaast is onderzocht welke actoren betrokken zijn binnen het vormen van beleid en hun perspectieven. De actoren analyse is ingezet om meer inzicht te krijgen wie er betrokken zijn, hun perspectieven, samenwerkingsverbanden, rollen en verantwoordelijkheden. Om inzicht te krijgen van het bezoekersmanagement in de regio en de verschillende ambities van de betrokken actoren, is een beleidsanalyse uitgevoerd, waarbij beleidsdocumenten en plannen zijn geanalyseerd. Tijdens de beleidsanalyse werd duidelijk dat er vanuit de plannen van verschillende actoren veel aandacht gegeven wordt aan herkenbaarheid en imago van de regio. Er kan geconcludeerd worden dat er een brede overeenstemming is over het versterken van het imago, het vergroten van bezoekersaantallen en het optimaliseren van samenwerking tussen actors. Dit heeft geleid tot een algemene breed gedragen visie voor het gebied. Echter zoals eerder al geconcludeerd ontbreekt de ruimtelijke vertaalslag en worden er nog maar weinig gerelateerde ingrepen uitgevoerd. De implementatie van het beleid lijkt dus lastig van de grond te komen. Daartoe is

onderzocht wat de oorzaken hiervan zijn. Deze analyse heeft duidelijk gemaakt dat een zes tal barrières te onderscheiden zijn: gebrek aan kennis van ruimtegebruik, gebrek aan kennis van ruimtelijke consequenties van plannen, gebrek aan kennis van visies en plannen van actoren, onduidelijkheid over samenwerkingsverbanden en verantwoordelijkheden tussen actoren, financiële gebreken, welke resulteert in onvoldoende implementatie van bezoekersmanagement gerelateerde ingrepen. Hieronder zal kort een nadere uitleg worden gegeven. Deze barrières zijn terug te voeren tot een gebrek aan afstemming van perspectieven tussen actoren. Een voorbeeld van het gebrek van deze afstemming is dat ambities van actoren zoals “bezoekersaantallen vergroten” niet is gereflecteerd aan bijvoorbeeld de ruimtelijke consequenties. Dit is te herleiden aan een gebrek aan ruimtelijke kennis maar ook het recreatief gebruik van deelgebieden in de regio. Een voorbeeld zijn de bezoekerstrends in “de Loonse en Drunense Duinen”. Door het gebrek van deze kennis wordt het inbedden van bezoekersmanagement binnen de regio bemoeilijkt. Daarnaast wordt deze afstemming van perspectieven bemoeilijkt door de verschillende visies tussen actoren. Een voorbeeld is onduidelijkheid over welke naam er gebruikt moet gaan worden voor deelgebieden in de regio. De streekraad “Het Groene Woud” pleit voor een algemene huisstijl, terwijl de overkoepelende samenwerking van de vrijetijdssector pleit voor naamsbekendheid van een deel gebied “Leisure Boulevard” welke onderdeel is van “Het Groene Woud”. Beiden hebben ze ook andere ideeën (vergroten van bezoekers aantallen “economisch”) en manieren van promotie. De verschillen tussen perspectieven leiden tot verschillende manieren van het promoten van deelgebieden die binnen de regio functioneren. Dit wordt bijvoorbeeld zichtbaar door het gebruik van namen of verhalen over de ontstaansgeschiedenis van het gebied of de regio. Het komt echter niet ten goede aan de herkenbaarheid van de regio en men probeert juist hierop in te zetten. Daarnaast is er onduidelijkheid over samenwerkingsverbanden tussen actoren, waardoor overzicht verloren is en verantwoordelijkheden onduidelijk worden. Dit door de verschillende samenwerkingsverbanden. Een voorbeeld zijn de ontstaande platforms. Daarnaast speelt financiële gebreken een rol binnen ontwikkeling van toerisme en recreatie aldus de ondernemers. Door deze barrières in de uitvoering van ruimtelijke maatregelen ondervindt de ruimte steeds meer druk. Kortom, actoren zitten op een lijn wanneer het gaat over imago versterking en het vergroten van bezoekersaantallen, maar er zijn verschillen in ideeën en manieren van promotie van de regio en deelgebieden. Een ander voorbeeld is dat het perspectief “vergroten bezoekersaantallen” niet direct samen gaat met het perspectief van de natuur- en landschapsbehoud organisaties. Overzicht in verschillende perspectieven is onduidelijk, zo ook de afstemming hiervan, zoals ambities uit de vrijetijdssector en ruimtelijke consequenties. Kortom, door de behandelde bestuurlijke barrières wordt het steeds moeilijker een duidelijk overzicht te krijgen van wat de actoren nu willen, hoe ze het willen en wie het gaat uitvoeren. Om bezoekersmanagement aandacht te geven in het bestuur van de regio en het inpassen binnen het regionaal beleid, is het van belang het begrip gestalte te geven, het verkrijgen van een duidelijk overzicht van samenwerkingsverbanden (interacties) waardoor perspectieven van actoren naar voren komen en er ingespeeld kan worden op de benoemde afstemming. Dit is deels in het onderzoeksrapport verwerkt. Enkele voorbeelden zijn: overeenstemming te vinden over naam gebruik en ambities te koppelen aan ruimtelijke consequenties. Kom overeen dat er verschillende perspectieven zijn en stop met het gebruik van container begrippen. Een van de belangrijkste punten is dat beleid duidelijk geformuleerd moet worden, dat wil zeggen uitvoerbaar en begrijpelijk voor alle actoren. Het is daarbij van belang dat iedereen van elkaar weet wat ermee bedoeld wordt ofwel de interpretatie correct is zodat het uitvoerbaar is. En niet achteraf wordt tegen gewerkt doordat het op

een andere manier geïmplementeerd is wat kan leiden tot implementatie moeilijkheden. Alvorens het opzetten van een bezoekersmanagement plan in de regio, is het van belang een beeld te krijgen van de bezoekersstromen, trends en bezoekerscapaciteit van de verschillende bezienswaardigheden, de huidige toerisme infrastructurele en ecologische problemen, maar ook de verschillende ambities van betrokken actoren een basis zou kunnen zijn het “Beleidskader & Uitvoeringsagenda vrijetijdseconomie 2013-2020”.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background information

During the last decades outdoor recreation became more popular (Bell *et al.*, 2007). The number of visitors in national parks, nature areas or other touristic places increased accordingly (Bell *et al.*, 2007; Siikamäki, 2009; TNS, 2009). This growing number of visitors can be explained by the increased time for leisure and improvement of “connectivity” such as transport facilities or the increase of comfort and speed of current cars (Jaarsma *et al.*, 2009; Zondag, 2008). Henceforth, the tourism infrastructure such as roads and parking places at park level, but also at region level are used abundantly (Regnerus *et al.*, 2005). The increases of visitors expected to affect the regional income of leisure economy since visitors make use of facilities such as accommodation options and catering industry (Zondag, 2008). Through the improvement of transport facilities and accommodation facilities and the promotion of these facilities and uniqueness of areas, entrepreneurs and public organisations hope to attract more visitors and to increase the duration of their stay. An increasing number of visitors does also raise new problems. Conservationists indicate that an increase of visitor numbers can have destructive impacts on biodiversity and unspoilt environments (ecosystems). In the time that a visitor visits an area it has a sort of impact (Giongo, *et al.*, 1993). The visitor can damage natural resources and eco-systems due to air and noise pollution of cars and damage to vegetation and wildlife by cyclists or walkers. The severity of impact can differ and in some ways it can decrease the quality of the environment. The abundant uses of natural resources and visitor conflicts can have impacts on the quality of the environment, which influence the experience of the visitor and tourism and recreation quality (Donk, 2000). Stated by Farrell & Marion, (2002): visitor impact problems require management for the following reasons: *“impacts may compromise protected area resource protection, many impacts occur rapidly at initial or low levels of use, some impacts are cumulative, increasingly degrading resources over time and impacts may lead to other undesirable consequences such as diminished visitation, economic benefits or resource protection incentives”*. This human interaction with nature concerns negative effects and stresses therefore the need to find a balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation (Beunen *et al.*, 2007; Cochrane, 2006; Cope, *et al.*, 1999; Kerkvliet & Nowell, 2000). The growing number of visitors stresses the importance of management of visitors (Beunen *et al.*, 2007; Eagles, *et al.*, 2002; WWF, 1999). In order to find a balance between tourism and recreation and nature and environment objectives, visitor management could be a solution to mitigate the impacts. Visitor management deals both with the experience and satisfaction of the visitor and minimize the impact of the visitor on the resource. According to McArthur, (1993): *“visitor management can be seen as the management of visitors in a manner that maximises the quality of the visitor experience and minimises the impact of visitation on resources”*. The current perspective of management of visitors deals both with the visitor and the park or environment, which aims at visitor satisfaction and nature conservation. Studies on the interaction human-nature as is explained above have shown that visitor management such as the control and concentration of visitors on specific spots is not only a point of attention for park managers but also for the managers of related facilities such as infrastructure, hotels and restaurants (Beunen *et al.*, 2006). Visitors make use of other tourism and recreation related facilities since their duration of stay is longer in which they have an impact at park and regional level. A region can be seen as an area which forms and functioning as a whole. Since visitor numbers increases in a region and when the environment experiencing consequences, visitor

management becomes a regional concern and makes the implementation of visitor management related measures at a regional level important. The management of visitors at a regional level, involves diverse actors, which are involved in spatial planning of the region. They cooperate to formulate and implement policies, in which perspectives of actors being coordinated and institutionalized in policies. Research on the implementation of tourism policy in general is weak and of visitor management policy is even slimmer (Dodds & Butler, 2009). The evaluation of tourism policy is rare and recommendations to change or augment systems to make policies actually work and be more accountable are even rarer (Dodds & Butler, 2009). In the literature of spatial planning of tourism and recreation are often mentioned difficulties in policy implementation. An example is that during the formulation and implementation of visitor management policies, the differences in perspectives and visions between actors can act as barriers (Head *et al.*, 2005). *“Management decisions are not worth the paper they are written on unless the policies and decisions are implemented”* (Elliot, 1997: 97). This study will focus on the coordination of perspectives in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies and which perspectives of actors are translated in policies and actions in space in which barriers will come forward.

1.2 Problem description

Managers of infrastructure and nature- and landscape conservation are concerned about the increasing number of visitors, which influence the pressure on tourism infrastructure and nature. In addition, conservationists mention the insufficient implementation of measures to disperse and control visitor flows. The pressure affects tourism and recreation quality by means of traffic problems such as parking and traffic jams, whereby the importance to find a balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation is underpinned. It can be stated that the societal and environmental problem is the imbalance of visitor impact and nature- and landscape conservation. As is stated previously visitor management could be a solution to create the balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation. Since the visitor have an impact on the environment at park and region level such as the use of infrastructure, hotels and restaurant in a region, visitor management at a regional level is stressed. Visitor management at a regional level can be seen as follow. At regional level different actors are involved to set direction in regional development such as public organisations, conservationists and entrepreneurs in the leisure sector. These actors are involved in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies, each with a role, perspective, interest and goal. They cooperate, exchange their knowledge and negotiate to develop tourism and recreation and minimize the impact of the visitor on nature. The cooperation and interaction between actors leads to policies. However, the difference in perspectives and visions between actors can act as barrier during formulation and implementation of policies (Head *et al.*, 2005). In the article of Jordan & Lenschow (2010) is stated that; when political consensus have been reached, this will not automatically result in an actual application in practice. Since this study is focused on the coordination of perspectives and barriers in formulation and implementation of policies, attention is given to this statement.

Much has been written about visitor management at park level, for example the implementation of measures concerning the control of visitors in parks (Beunen *et al.*, 2006; Regnerus, *et al.*, 2005). In the literature of J. Gehl are mentioned furnishing elements which influence route structures of visitors. Less emphasize is given to visitor management at a regional level. The literature does mention the importance of the adjacent area of touristic places. However, the management of these areas or management of visitors at a regional level is not mentioned, while it is important to find a balance between visitor impacts and nature objectives to guarantee recreation quality. Success of interventions depends on additional measures taken elsewhere such as, signage, parking facilities etc. (Beunen *et al.*, 2010b). This emphasize close cooperation with not only park managers and other companies which are involved at park level but also actors involved in spatial planning of tourism and recreation at regional level. In addition, the evaluation of tourism policy is rare and recommendations to change or augment systems to make policies actually work and be more accountable are even rarer. Most studies of policy within the frame of tourism have been normative prescriptive studies of what governments should do rather than detailed examinations of what has happened and why. In order to enhance the knowledge of policy in visitor management this research will focus on visitor management approach from a regional perspective in which barriers in policy implementation will be researched. Research on this topic has three basic elements. First, there is a need to examine visitor management policy and its implementation. Second there is a need for outlining and understanding barriers to achieving successful policy implementation can provide important lesson for achieving success. Third, it is necessary to create a framework of how to achieve

successful visitor management policy implementation for managers, policy makers and other destinations in the future development of visitor management at a regional scale. The study will focus on the first and second element.

In general, the extended knowledge on visitor management can be used by policy makers and decision makers. The result of the study can be an eye opener for different actors in formulation and implementation of policies. The uniqueness of the study is that it deals with the formulation of policies whether the cooperation between actors, coordination of perspectives and which perspectives are established in policies and measures in practice. The study comprises the whole process of policy, which is unique and contribute to the results of the study. By outlining visitor management policies from development to evaluation, this study provide recommendations for other destinations which experience an imbalance between visitor impact and nature objectives and who aim to work towards visitor management at a region level.

1.3 Objective of the study

The objective of this research is: to provide insight in the barriers that complicate the formulation and implementation of visitor management policies at a regional level.

1.4 Research questions

Main research question:

Which aspects are important in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies and how do these aspects affect these processes?

Sub-research questions:

What perspectives and interest do have actors involved in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies?

In which way do actors cooperate in policy formulation and implementation?

Which visitor management related policies are established?

Which policy related measures have been implemented?

What are the spatial consequences of the chosen development vision?

1.5 Case-study “Het Groene Woud”

In order to substantiate the research and answer the above mentioned questions a case-study has been carried out. This research has focussed on the region “Het Groene Woud”. An area description will be given in chapter four. With regard to the different ambitions of operating actors in the region such as “doubling the amount of visitors in the region”, visitor management in this region is underpinned. Conservationists in the region mentioned that measures to control visitor flows at a regional level are implemented insufficiently. Due to these phenomenons there is a need to limit the negative spatial consequences of the increasing number of visitors in the region. This makes the region a suitable case-study to answer the research questions.

1.6 Reading guide

This report is divided in seven chapters. Chapter two (Theoretical framework) describes the results of the literature review. It elaborates on the perspective that is used for the research. The subsequent chapter (Research design) discusses the used methods for the research. This chapter will explain the applied methods and examination of data. Chapter four (visitor management in the region “Het Groene Woud”) elaborates the findings of the used methods. Chapter five is an analysis on the results. Chapter six (Discussion) discusses the results, used and alternative methods. The last chapter (Conclusion & Recommendations) reflects on the main research question and will provide constructive recommendations on visitor management in the region “Het Groene Woud”.

2. Theoretical Framework

Conservationists indicate that policies related measures such as the control and guidance of visitor flows are not sufficiently implemented (Borg *et al.*, 1996). This study investigates the implementation problem of visitor management. The theoretical framework elaborates on a perspective about policy formulation and implementation in spatial planning of tourism and recreation. This perspective is rooted in the theories of formulation and implementation of policies, where different potential barriers are explained, which also could play a role in governance of the region “Het Groene Woud”. The theoretical framework can be seen as a collection of theories and concepts which are interrelated and form a coherent perspective used during the research (Gentner, 1983). The following perspective is central in this research: the construction and role of place perspectives in formulation and implementation of policies in regional governance. This perspective is created on the basis of the theory of the construction of place perspectives (Stedman, 2004), policy formulation and the cooperation of actors (Faludi, 2000; Paasi, 2010; Shafiri, 2003) and policy implementation and perspectives (Healey, 2003). The most relevant concepts are: “regional governance”, “sense of place”, “place attachment”, “place identity”, “planning”. The diversity of regional governance, the cooperation of actors, as well as the reshape and institutionalisation of perspectives of actors in formulation and implementation of policies will be explained and is illustrated in figure 2. In addition, the study elaborates on visitor management in five different components. According these components is studied which perspectives of actors are translated into policies, plans and specific measures in space.

2.1 Regional governance & the construction of place perspectives

Last decades the concept “governance” is used more often in spatial planning since actors are more involved in spatial planning processes. During this study governance is seen as the interaction of various actors involved in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies in which diverse clusters with different perspectives and interest collaborate. The concept ‘governance’ changed in mode of governing in which its meaning also changed (Foster & Barnes, 2012). The old hierarchical model of governing in which state authorities exert sovereign control over people and groups (top-down), has changed nowadays to a bottom-up mode of governing, where private actors (formal organisations) participate in formulation and implementation of policies and being involved (bottom-up) in an early staged (Rhodes, 2007). This means that public organisations (province) act as facilitator and some of their decision responsibilities are decentralised to agencies or organisations (Simon & Batterbury, 2006). The changed mode of governing may lead to unclear boundaries of responsibilities, fuzzy scales of policy and governance arrangements (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009; Lane, 2003), which can influence policy implementation (Faguet, 2011). Theoretically the advantage of the new form of governing could be the improved information about preferences and local needs, but there is no guarantee that there will be act on these preferences (Litvack, 2010).

The coordination of perspectives (governing) of actors (with different roles) produces decisions that are responsive to community and visitor interests and values (Eggenberger & Partidario, 2000; Renn, *et al.*, 1993). According to Mayntz, (2006): “the word ‘governance’ simply meant ‘governing’, government seen as a process”. Difference in perspectives may disappear in governance due to the reshape of perspectives of actors, through communication, trust, or strategic planning. The perspectives of actors and the topic of discussion in governance are responsive to problems in the region or visions of actors about the region. In regional governance of visitor management in “Het Groene Woud” are involved diverse actors in formulation and implementation of policies in which the coordination of different perspectives have been studied.

The construction of place perspectives

In regional governance different actors do play a role, each with an interest and perspective about regional development. When perspectives are dissimilar it can be difficult to understand each other which may lead to stagnation in formulation and implementation of policies (Gobillon *et al.*, 2007). This stresses the importance of communication and understanding each other in which the overview in different perspectives and cooperation of actors become important, but also to be able to anticipate finding agreement which contribute to a smoother process (Bansouleh, 2009). The difference in perspectives can be explained by how actors

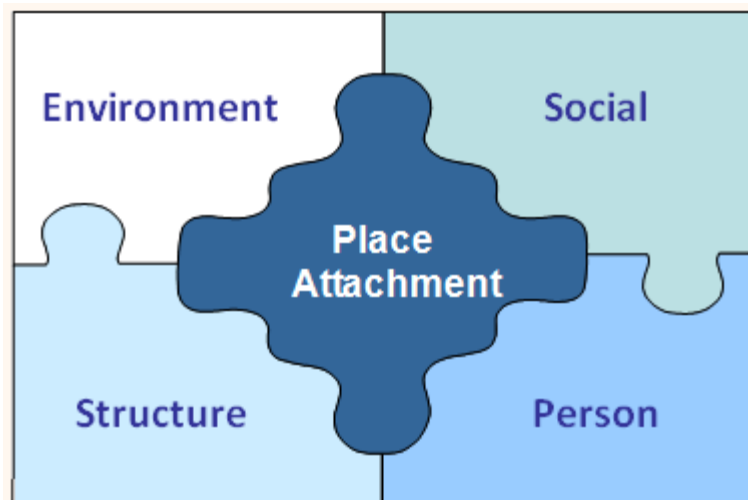


Figure 1 Elements of place attachment (source: Auer & Carson 2010).

constructing meaning about a place (Paasi, 2011). The concept “sense of place” is related to the construction of meaning. Sense of place is understood as the construction of sense making, this by feelings and perception (Hay, 2008). According to Kudryavtsev *et al.*, (2012): *“sense of place is a combination of the two principal and complementary concepts: place meaning and place attachment”*. The construction of place meaning is likely different for each person and in the same location different people may have different place meanings (Stedman, 2008). It depends on how the world is perceived, which is influenced by background (culture, age, sex). Argued by Relph (2007): *“the meanings of places may be rooted in the physical settings, objects and activities”*. The construction of place meaning is likely to be diverse and contested (Healey, 2004). Stated by Arefi, (1999): *“its meaning and purpose suggest different things to different people; for some, it carries a significant emotional, cultural and/or historical value manifested in local, regional identity”*. This value can be understood as “place attachment” see also figure 1. Stated by Stedman (2006): *“place meanings may serve as the reason for place attachment and depend on the value that people put on these meanings”*. Place attachment refers to the bond between people and places. It can also be understood as the degree to which a place is important to people (Jorgensen and Stedman 2001; Low and Altman 1992). In short, place attachment refers to the bond between people and places and reflects how strongly people are attracted towards places, while place meaning describes the reasons for this attachment which may be rooted in the physical settings, objects and activities. These physical settings, objects and activities can be seen as elements functioning in a place. A few examples are: infrastructure, land and water, nature, ecology and ecosystems. These elements shape the environment and give the environment a certain character (Cliff *et al.*, 2009; Hallak *et al.*, 2012). In overall, the concepts of place meaning and place attachment address the social-spatial relation between perspectives of actors, policies and spatial structure (Lesser *et al.*, 2011).

2.2 Policy formulation & implementation “the cooperation of actors”

In regional governance of visitor management many different actors such as public and private organisations are involved in the formulation and implementation of policies. The intent of the interaction between actors in regional governance is to set direction in regional development (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). The involved actors have each have a role, perspective, interest and goal in regional development. In regional governance, actors cooperate and negotiate to reshape and institutionalise perspectives in order to construct widely supported policies (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Planning in relation to the formulation and implementation of policies can be conceptualised as the coordination of different perspectives. This implies understanding how interactions between actors result in shared goals and how these goals are transformed into policies, plans and specific measures (Faludi, 2000; Hajer & Zonneveld, 2000). The understanding of interactions between perspectives gives better insights in role and interest of actors in formulation and implementation of policies. Which gives clarity about hierarchical relations between different perspectives and why certain perspectives are translated to policies and others not. This can be linked to power or status of the dominant actor. Perspectives which are not established in policies might influence later policy implementation, which fits with the statement of Jordan & Lenschow (2010) who argue that, if political consensus has been reached, this will not automatically result in an actual application in practice.

Policy formulation can be seen as part of planning. A policy can be understood as an established perspective and ambition of actor(s), which is formulated in consultation of involved actors which means that a policy is not intrinsic and find its meaning by people who interpret and apply the policy (Yanow, 1993). According to Beunen *et al.*, (2010a): *“policy formulation does not stop once a policy is drawn up but continues during its implementation, in which the struggle between different interpretations (perspectives) of policies starts.* Established policies can be guiding principles used to set direction (Anderson, 2005). Policy formulation itself can be understood as follow: *“policy formulation involves making decisions about the general directions in which change or development should occur; particularly for decisions which have direct or indirect implications of a controversial, sensitive, value-laden, or ‘political’ nature”* (Shafiri, 2003): In general it can be stated that “policy” and the “formulation” of policies are *“a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where these decisions should, in principle, be within the power of these actors to achieve”* (Jenkins, 1978). The close relation between planning and policy formulation is also reflected in the fact that plan documents frequently include a mixture of ‘policies’ and ‘plans’ and often the two cannot easily be separated (Shafiri, 2003). Also stated by (Shafiri, 2003): *“it is seldom possible to draw clear boundaries between policy-making, planning, and implementation or between the roles of the politician, the planner, and the administrator”*.

Public organisations such as provinces and municipalities are the central organizations which governing and control formulation and implementation of policies. Policies only gain effect if and after they are interpret and applied in planning and decision making practices on a local level (Beunen, *et al.*, 2010a). Implementation is the continuation of formulation of policies of turning policy into practice in which policies may reshape. It is the stage of policy-making between the establishment of a policy and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects (Anderson & Sotir Hussey, 2006). Policy implementation involves translating the goals and objectives of a policy into an operating or ongoing program. This involves interpretation and reinterpretation of policies. Also in policy implementation place perspectives can change (Healey, 2004). The environment is constantly changing, due to implementation of policy related measures. Also perspectives might change (as is explained previously) and therefore reformulating of policies is plausible.

Formulation and implementation of policies are considered to be on-going processes with a strong relation with the environment and perspectives of actors (Healey, 2004 also illustrated by the arrows in figure 2). These are both on going political and strongly interwoven processes (Sharifi, 2003). They are about the continuous struggle between perspectives of actors (which are not static) in which the place, established policies and plans play a role in formulation and implementation of policies. These can be seen as the building blocks in formulation and implementation of policies. Argued by (Dodds & Butler, 2009) the policy process is never ending, as any decision or action usually needs further approval and implementation. Analytically one can distinguish different phases in the processes and one can distinguish different means of coordination. Instruments of coordination practices and policies affecting space are the use of concepts, strategic communication or the development of trust. The use of concepts such as “sustainability” or “identity improvement” can combine people due the multiple interpretation possibilities which can serve to convince and find agreement

between actors (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). However, during implementation of policies (the interpretation and reconsideration of policies into action) may stagnate.

Figure 2 illustrates, the previous elaborated perspective exemplified with the different elements (subparagraphs) of regional governance of visitor management. These elements are interlinked and in the process they influence each other. An example is that perspectives of actors might reshape in policy formulation but might also might change in policy formulation when space of place changes. The element policies & plans is the result of the cooperation and interaction of actors in order to set direction in development, however established policies are not absolute. Policies need to be transformed into practical actions in practice, in which different perspective play a role. In the process it is important to know what the current situation is, what actors actually want in order to develop, what things needs to be done to get there and who is responsible? Otherwise policy implementation is stagnated.

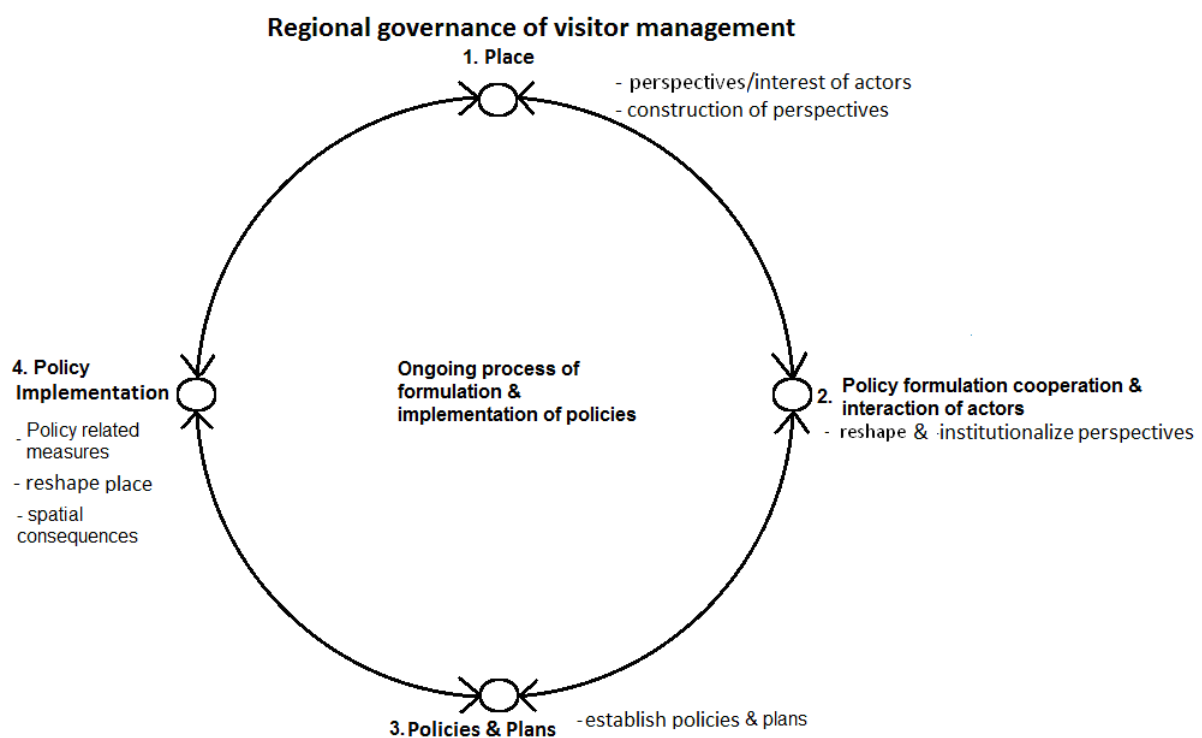


Figure 2 Governance of visitor management "the on going political process of formulation & implementation of policies".

2.3 Visitor management components

Visitor management deals both with the visitor and the park or environment, which aims at visitor satisfaction and nature conservation (Graham, *et al.*, 1988). It tries to match the wishes of visitors with the possibilities of the environment (Donk, 2000), in a manner that maximises the quality of the visitor experience and minimises the impact on the resource (McArthur, 1993). The visitor management plans deal with interpretation, information and education, visitor safety transport, access and infrastructure and profiling (Donk, 2000), which aims to influence design and use (behaviour) of space. Visitor management in this study is divided in five different components which are interlinked with each other. The components led the research:

- Signalling;
- Inform;
- Navigate;
- Concentrate;
- Accommodate.

The component signalling is understood as giving a “signal” to attract people about the distinctiveness and uniqueness of a region or place(s). This by for example “place branding”. Place branding in relation to visitor management can be seen as the promotion of qualities in a region. Several practical examples of place branding are: granting names to a region or the promotion of activities (walking/cycling routes) but also, signage is an example to increase recognition (Papadopoulos, 2004). The component “informing” is perceived as providing information about a region or place (which is also part of the first component). Some examples are advertisement boards or providing information via social media. The component “navigate” is defined as the navigation of visitors to their destination(s) by controlling their behaviour. It is the part intended to control and disperses visitors, by for example the promotion of activities at certain times. The component “accommodate” is understood as the accommodation of visitors such as restaurants and hotels and meanwhile “concentration” of visitors, which influence the duration of the visitor in which “place branding” come back.

Drawing upon the different components of visitor management is study in which way perspectives of actors are translated into policies and actions in the region based on the components of visitor management. The topics of negotiations, actors in formulation and implementation of policies are selected according these components. Policies in relation to these components are determined and policy related measures in space are identified.

2.4 Analytical framework

The research have focus on visitor management approach from a regional perspective in which barriers in policy implementation are researched. Therefore perspectives of actors and their role in policy formulation and implementation are investigated. The continuous struggle between perspectives of actors can be understood by looking at the cooperation between actors, and by analysing how and why specific perspectives are translated into policies, plans and specific measures. In this analysis it is important to take into account that when political consensus has been reached, this will not automatically result in an actual application in practice (Jordan & Lenschow, 2010). The components of visitor management in regional perspective served as guidance during the time of the research. Drawing on the elaborated theoretical perspective the following elements will be researched during the research:

- (1) Perspectives/interest of actors
- (2) Cooperation of actors
- (3) Institutionalized perspectives (established policies & plans)
- (4) Policy related measures
- (5) Spatial consequences

Chapter three will elaborate the way on how this data is collected and analysed.

3. Research Design

3.1 Methods

Figure 3 illustrates the coherent perspective and the above mentioned themes, which has been discussed in the theoretical framework and used during the research. The coloured planes illustrate the relation between the themes. The boxes illustrate the aspects which will be investigated by the analysis. For example the actors analysis is in relation to the themes “place perspectives” and “policy formulation and cooperation of actors” in which the aspects “perspectives/interest of actors as well as the cooperation of actors are investigated. These elements correspond to the chapters and paragraphs. Figure 4 illustrates the process of the research stepwise.

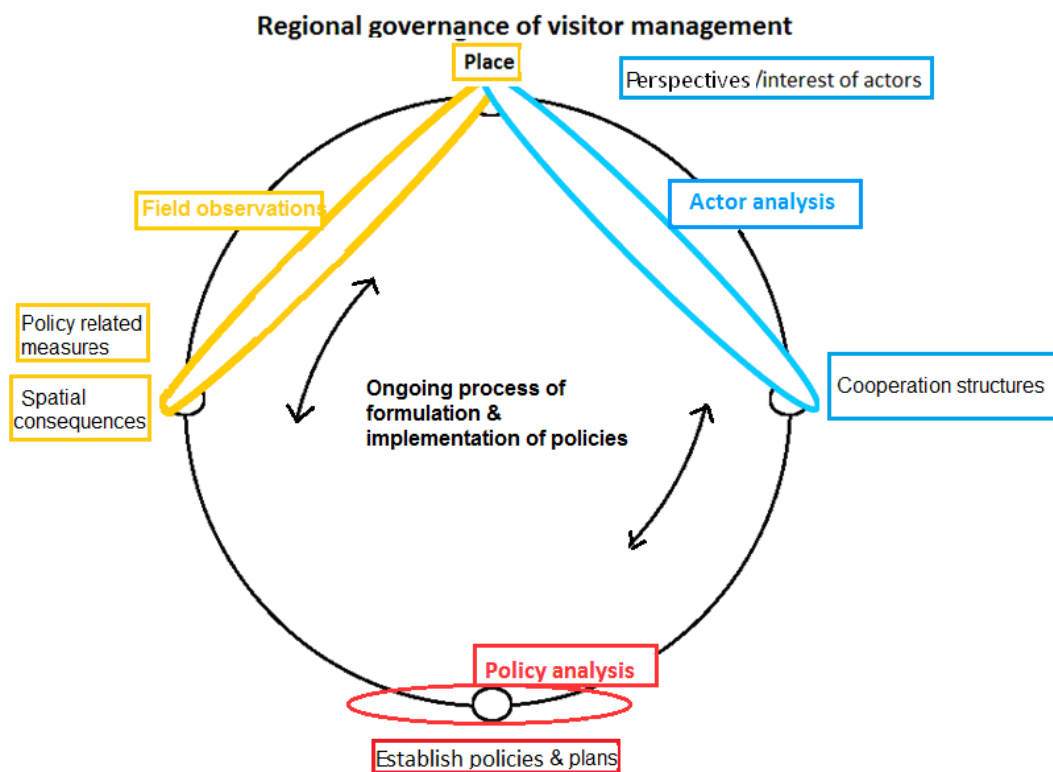


Figure 3 Methods & data information

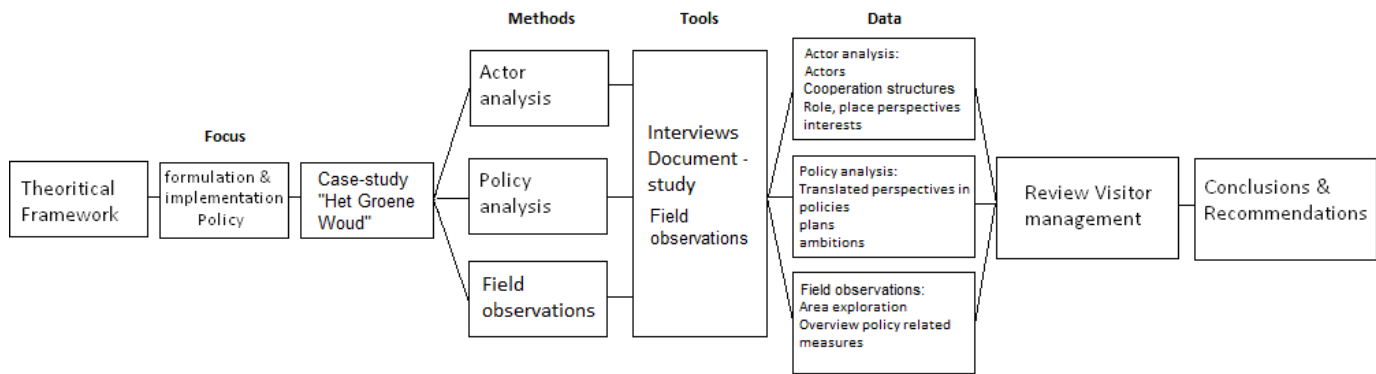


Figure 4 Research design

To provide an answer on the research questions mentioned above, the following steps have been taken.

Questions 1 & 2: What perspectives and interest do have actors involved in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies? (perspectives/interest(s) of actors). In which way do actors cooperate in formulation and implementation of policies?

Actor analysis –interviews

In order to provide an answer on sub-research question one and two an actor analysis and interviews are conducted. The actor analysis provides an overview about the involved actors in the policy process. The interviews provided deeper information about the actors. The follow topics are discussed in the interviews: work domain, roles, their responsibilities and those from others, place perspectives, perception, development perspectives, interest(s), cooperation between actors, conflicts in the policy process and spatial problems in the region. According these topics an image about the coordination of perspectives could be drawn. Five persons who are active in organisations in the spatial planning, nature- and landscape conservation and leisure cluster are interviewed:

- Natuurmonumenten (nature manager);
- Leisure Boulevard (promoter region);
- Province (alliance broker of the region);
- Province (policy advisor traffic & road safety);
- Vrijtijdshuis Brabant (leisure researcher).

Interviews are used as method of data collection because it provides deeper information regarding opinion, attitude, and perspective of the actors. Furthermore, interviews also offer flexibility to approach different actors while investigating a same topic (Noor, 2008). A structured interview is chosen instead of semi-structured interviews, this in order to compare/contrast participant responses. Interviews are taped to record information given by the interviewee, which contributed to the elaboration. The duration of the interviews fluctuate between 1 and 2 hours. The interviews are analysed according contradiction or similarities in answers on the above mentioned topics. This to determine differences in perspectives and barriers.

Questions 3: Which visitor management related policies are established? (established policies & plans).

Policy analysis – document-study, interviews

To provide an answer to this question, a policy analysis is performed by studying various (policy) documents. In addition the, interviews have been used to ask questions about regional policies and visitor management in the region. The document-study elaborates on established policies, visions and plans of the analysed actors in spatial planning, nature-and landscape conservation and leisure cluster. The analysed sources are selected according the above mentioned clusters. For the document-study the following policy-documents, visions and plans has been analysed:

- Development vision “Het Groene Woud” 2011-2025 (regional council “Het Groene Woud”);
- Policy & Implementation plan Leisure Economy 2013- 2020 (province North-Brabant);
- Kadernota toerisme en recreatie 2003-2010 (Tilburg);
- Integral vision tourism s-Hertogenbosch 2008;
- Vision Tourism & Recreation North-east Brabant (Vrijetijdshuis Brabant);
- Strategic Agenda BrabantStad 2012-2020;
- TOP Brabant tourism and recreation within the leisure cluster in 2020;
- Dreamport Brabant 2025 (Leisure Boulevard).

Attention is given to what extent visitor management is mentioned in the above plans of actors. The documents are analysed according the five elaborated components of visitor management. The documents provide guidelines to see how visitor management is elaborated on visions and plans of actors such as what is established for the signalling (promotion and attract) of visitors or what is written about the control (guidance) and concentration (disperse) of visitors. The document-study also contributed to the identification which perspectives of actors have been translated to policies. This also gave insight in the hierarchical relations between different perspectives.

Questions 4 & 5: Which policy related measures have been implemented? What are the spatial consequences of the chosen development vision? (Policy related measures).

Field observations

To provide an answer to sub-research question four and five, field observations and interviews has been carried out to see which policies are transform in spatial measures in the region and to see the spatial consequences. The analysis is preformed according to the five components of visitor management: “signalling”, “inform”, “navigate”, “concentrate” and “accommodate”. The policy related measures are compared with established policies, to define which policies are transformable and which remain. The field observations contributed to define spatial consequences of visitor numbers and the differences in perspectives of actors manifested in the different ways of promotion.

3.2 Data collection, sources & validity

The accuracy of collecting and analysing of the data, will contribute to the validity and reliability of this research. Validating findings is an important point in qualitative research, as it is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the reader (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). A strategy which will be used to increase validity of the findings in this research is triangulation. By triangulating the methods (i.e. using several methods to obtain data) and triangulating data – person triangulation (i.e. interviewing several interviewees for a same topic). According to: Adami & Kiger, (2005): *“triangulation in a study can be seen as the use of multiple methods for gathering information within a single study”*. Within this study, two types of data are gathered, primary data (field observations and interviews) and secondary data (literature review and documents study). Figure 5 illustrates the use of different data sources in this study.

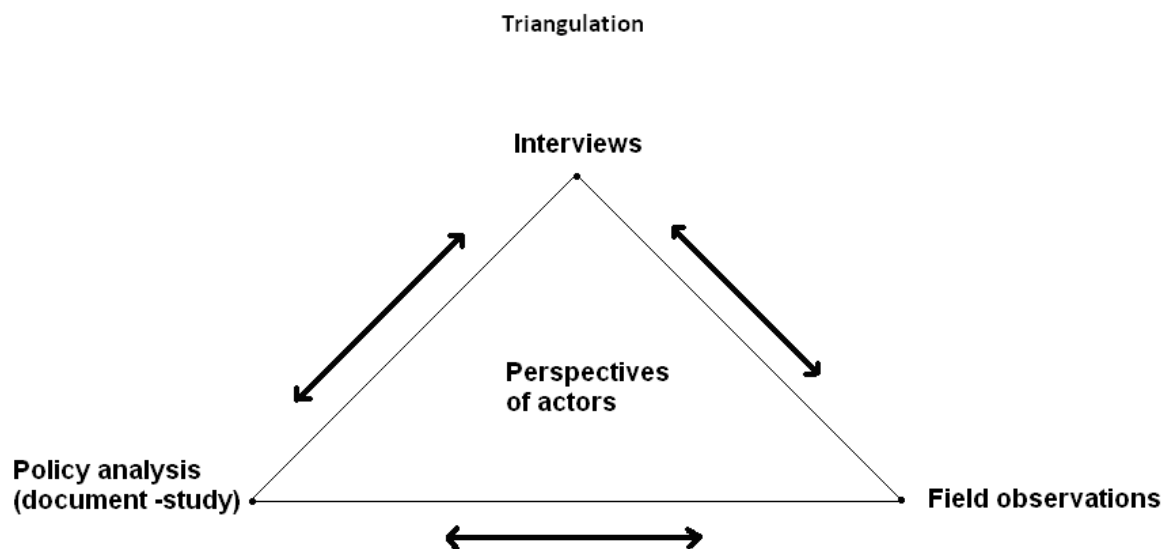


Figure 5 the use of different data sources.

This research aims to understand barriers in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies in which perspectives of actors are analysed. In which triangulation is created by using qualitative interpretations through interviews, policy analysis (document-study) and field observations. Hereby the research creates a link between observations, analysing and questioning which enhances the results of the research.

4. Visitor management in “Het Groene Woud”

4.1 Region description

The region “Het Groene Woud” is located in the province of North-Brabant (the Netherlands). From a geographical point of view the region can be seen as the triangle of the three bigger cities in North-Brabant respectively, Den Bosch, Tilburg, and Eindhoven also called “Het Groene Woud” see figure 6. According to lifescapeyourlandscape, (2011): *“Het Groene Woud” functions as the green heart of the cities, with 35,000 hectares of green landscape which holds 7,500 hectares of nature reserves*. It is the area where city people seek relaxation and recreation”. This part of the province North-Brabant is also referred to as “Hart van Brabant”. Later the different names that pertain to a single region will be further discussed (see chapter five). The National government of the Netherlands declared the landscape of “Het Groene Woud” as National Landscape (Hagens, 2010, lifescapeyourlandscape, 2011), due to its unique of variations and the blend of live-work-leisure, culture-nature, urban-rural (MinVROM 2004b, p.124). Due to this certificate, a certain policy which seeks preservation and conservation of this uniqueness is established for the region (Hagens, 2010). The region is characterised by a rich biodiversity and historical valuable character, which can be found in the different stories and themes that are associated with the region. Later this will be discussed further. The area is also part of the national ecological main structure (EHS), (lifescapeyourlandscape, 2011).

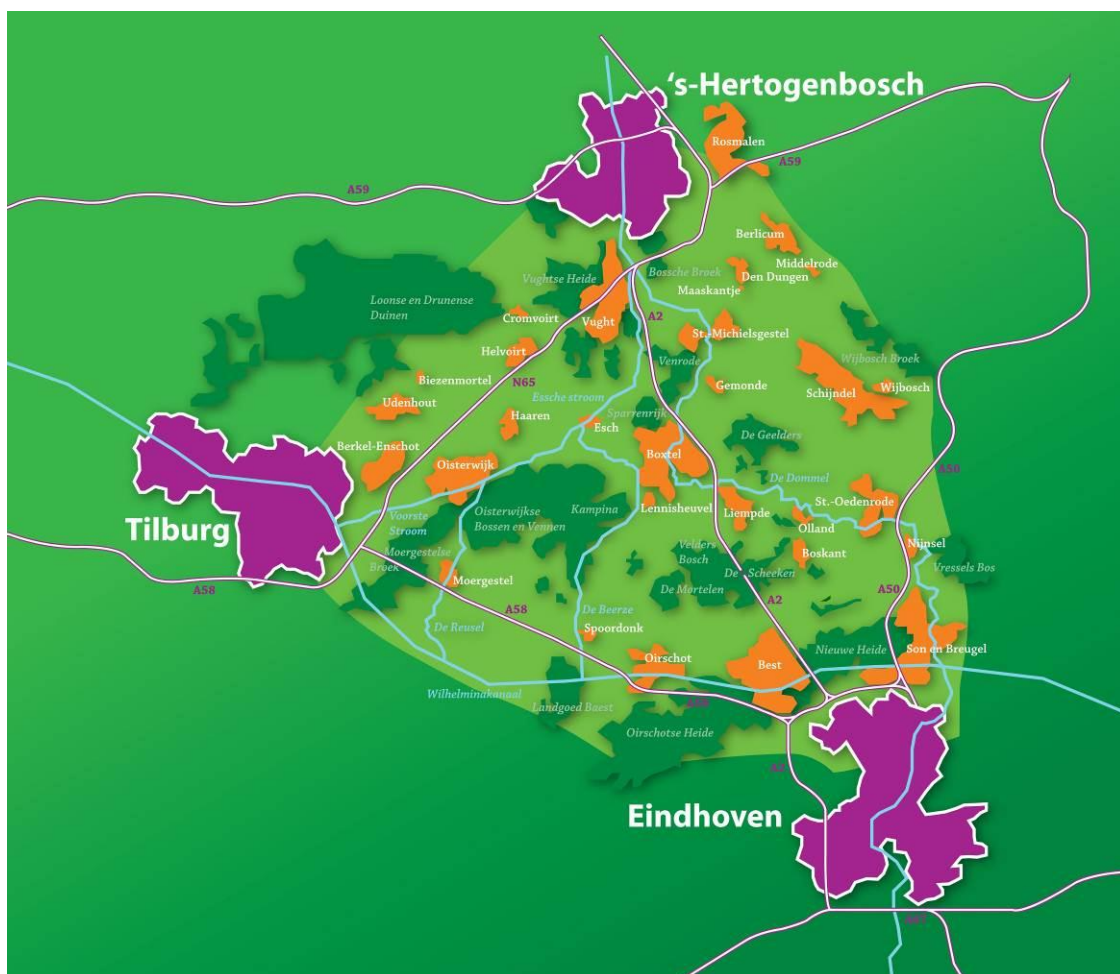


Figure 6 Overview "Het Groene Woud" (development vision "Het Groene Woud" 2011-2025).

Characteristics & Land-use

The region is characterised by different types of land uses, both with urban and rural characteristics. The region has diversity in landscape contrasts between cultural and natural elements. The cultural landscape has a rich biodiversity with old breeds of cattle, sheep's, chicken and doves. Additionally, several historical villages and chapels influence the cultural character. Between and around the villages plenty of streams (the Dommel, the Beerze, Reusel and Rozep), swamps, heath, round fields, poplar and divers woodlands are situated. It is precisely this variation in the landscape which is at the heart of the biodiversity. The region includes the following land-use types: forest, agriculture, industry and the three urban areas ('s-Hertogenbosch-Eindhoven-Tilburg). The more dominant sub-regions are the unique nature in national park "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen", "Oisterwijkse forest and meres" and "de Mortelen". National park "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen" is one of the biggest drift-sand areas in Europe. The "Oisterwijkse forest and meres" is characterised by the open landscape in combination of forest and meres, which is originate during the glacial period. The meres in the Oisterwijkse forest and meres arose 15.000 to 20.000 years ago, due to storms which changed the landscape. Typical of the "Oisterwijkse forest and meres" are the planted pine fields. The Mortelen is the largest preserved area in the region (10Km²). The Mortelen is characterised by its old peasant nature such as land consolidation. The "Brand" (near Tilburg and Haaren) is a marshy area with swamp and a permanent flood plain. Within these areas and places various leisure activities are possible such as biking and skating, horseback riding, hot air ballooning and canoeing.

Infrastructure

With regard to the tourism infrastructure in the region, there are several national highways and provincial roads which are important for the flow of visitors such as the A2, A50, A58, A59, A261, N65, N261, N620, and N624. Also railways and bus-lines between the bigger cities benefits to the accessibility of parks, nature areas and touristic places in the region. These route structures are expressed in figure 6 (see below).

Tourism & recreation

Due to the great demand of leisure activities in the province, the cluster provides businesses and employment. The leisure economy in North-Brabant is growing each year. In the leisure cluster are many people active, operating for a diverse set of companies (e.g. leisure entrepreneurs, leisure parks, cafes, restaurants and hotels) (Leisureboulevard.nl). Together they attract 10 million visitors each year which spend more than 5.3 billion (vrijetijdshuisbrabant.nl). The number of visitors can rise up to 40 to 50.000 a day counted by Vrijetijdshuis Brabant (researcher in the leisure sector). For this reason, tourism and recreation are important for the regional economy (regio-hartvanbrabant.nl). Besides the above mentioned landscape icons, also leisure parks and the organisation of events in the region such as the Efteling, Beekse Bergen, O13, Festival Mundial, museums are important in the region for tourism and recreation.

Attractive leisure activities in the region are the Efteling and "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen". The park "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen" has several routes for diverse visitors and recreants. For the hikers, five different routes are marked in the hiking route network. These routes are identified by signage along the road, information about these routes are given on the information panels situated at the important starting points and visitor information centres. The routes are based on the popular junction system, which means that these routes cross the highlights in the park and it connects to the

existing walking networks in the province. Also attention is given to special excursions tailored for schools, associations or for families. The different themes of the excursions are: nature experience tour (discover with organs of sense), season tour (seasonal nature), theme-excursion (assignments & games), general tour (origins of the area, flora and fauna, cultural history and management), excursion to the farmer (taste local products) and a cultural-historical tour.

4.2 Actor analysis “perspectives & interest(s) of actors”

This paragraph is an elaboration of the actor analysis which has carried out. As is mentioned in chapter three (Research design) special attention is given to the actors in the fields of:

- Spatial planning in tourism & recreation;
- Nature- and Landscape conservation;
- Leisure cluster.

The province North-Brabant aims to achieve a balance between spatial and leisure economic related objectives, in order to conserve qualities and increase the liveability in the region. Province North-Brabant is the governing organisation which bundles knowledge and gives guidance on legislation and regulations. The province is the coordinating body to reshape perspectives. The implementation of policy related measures is left to other organisations such as municipalities and Natuurmonumenten. The province North-Brabant is involved in projects which contribute to the conservation and strengthening landscape icons in the region. They operate according to political choices, figures and facts from practice administered by “Vrijetijds huis Brabant”. Recently the province and the leisure cluster constructed the so called “Policy & Implementation plan Leisure Economy 2013-2020”. According to alliance broker of the region (interview): *“the province is responsible for the establishment of the structural vision, beside that the province has a so called “area agenda”. This agenda includes listed projects which have priority”*.

In recent years the national government decentralised various tasks, including tourism and recreation policy. Also the province decentralised various task to municipalities and the leisure cluster. An example is that the province promotes and finance platforms Leisure Boulevard and TOP Brabant. As a result various other initiatives are originated. These initiatives will be elaborated later in this paragraph. The perspective of the province is related to maintain or improve quality of life in which development of the regional economy and conservation and preservation of spatial characteristics of the region are central. They aims to find a balance between perspectives of actors (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety). The interest of the province is that other actors have trust in the province which will contribute to the cooperation in policy processes (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety).

Municipalities play a role in spatial planning and the businesses in the leisure cluster. An example is to consider the extension of a leisure park or to solve traffic problems in municipalities. In order to control these different clusters, municipalities act according established legislations and protocols. Therefore municipalities work closely together with the province. Each municipality has a spatial development plan as well as a plan for tourism and recreation. These plans exist of a vision, an ambition as well as a clear implementation plan. The overall role of municipalities within the management of space is to give guidance on the division of space and measures which will be taken

within a municipality, wherein they expect advice by the province if necessary. Municipalities in the region are mainly focussed on the urban areas like cities and villages. The central zone of the region (nature area) is divided and mainly property of land and nature managers which will be discussed below. The perspective of municipalities is to develop tourism and recreation, in which they expect support from province. Their interest is related to attract visitors and improve their income in tourism and recreation.

Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is a public executive organisation of the province of North-Brabant. Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is the researcher in the leisure cluster. They retain a digital data base with actual trends and figures of visitors, which are also collected by the organisation. This knowledge is used for their own products and activities such as the project “Natuurpoorten” and the provision of a cycling network. Besides that, their knowledge is also used by entrepreneurs in the leisure or public organisations for the development of policies or projects. Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is involved in spatial projects, marketing and promotion of the leisure economy in the province North-Brabant. Another role is to ensemble and joins, organisations and projects. The intent is to create better cooperation (interviews, leisure researcher and promoter region). This organisation focuses on the smaller organisations in the leisure sector (entrepreneurs in the leisure) compared to Leisure Boulevard which focus on the bigger organisations such as public organisations and international market. The perspective of Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is related to development in tourism and recreation in the province, this by attracting and providing information to visitors (interview, leisure researcher). In order to attract visitors, Vrijetijdshuis Brabant focuses on social media. *“Without visitors there is no research”* (interview, leisure researcher)

The programme of the organisation Midpoint Brabant is based on cooperation between public organisations, education and platforms in the leisure cluster such as municipalities, province, university of Tilburg, Vrijetijdshuis Brabant. An associate organisation of Midpoint Brabant is “Leisure Boulevard” which focuses on maintaining and strengthening the leisure economy of the province, by means of the creation of connections between leisure entrepreneurs (restaurants, hotels etc.), knowledge institutes and public organisations in order to reshape perspectives, which help to create support. The main objective of Leisure Boulevard is to strengthen the business climate in the leisure cluster, in means of regional marketing and the creation of strategic cooperation structures. Leisure Boulevard aims to double the amount of visitors in the region in 2025. The underlying motivation is to promote the leisure cluster of the province internationally. The province provides financial support for this initiative, because it connects to the perspective and vision of the province. In general, Leisure Boulevard is the actor when it comes to regional marketing of the leisure cluster in the region. This partnership is focused on development in tourism and recreation in means of regional marketing (interview, promoter region). Compared to other organisations the perspective of Leisure Boulevard is to increase cooperation on a regional national and international scale in order to increase support at different levels and increase status.

Nature- and Landscape Conservation

The organisations “Natuurmonumenten” and “Brabants Landschap” are working together on the management and maintenance of nature in the region. Natuurmonumenten and Brabants Landschap are non-profit organisations which aim to conserve nature and promote the potentials and benefits of nature for the human being. This by means of buying, managing and maintaining of unique land. The aim of reorganisation is to return and emphasize historical characteristics or to increase the biodiversity. With these purposes the organisations are lobbying at the province. They also provide advice on the formulation of policies and legislations. Both organisations play a role in visitor management in nature parks in the region, by means of spreading visitors, in order to limit pollution to eco-systems such as noise, air etc. This aspect becomes very important since the leisure cluster intends to double the amount of visitors in the region (interview nature manager). A project which is connected to this is “Natuurpoorten”, this project will be further elaborated. Brabants Landschap and Natuurmonumenten release walking and cycling routes and are responsible for the organisation of lectures and excursions in the region. The reorganisation of walking and cycling routes or other activities in nature are adjusting in consultation with the province, municipalities, property owners and volunteers whereby Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is contributing with figures and facts (regional council). The main work domain of Natuurmonumenten is national park “de Loonse and Drunense Duinen” and “Oisterwijkse forest and meres”. Main working domain of Brabants Landschap in “Het Groene Woud” is “de Mortelen”. Other adjoining nature areas and estates in the region are from private owners or is property of municipalities. The perspective of the nature- and landscape organisations is to conserve nature and promote the potentials and benefits of nature in order to preserve or increase recreation quality (interview nature manager), in means of the mitigation of visitor impact.

4.3 Cooperation between actors

Figure 7 illustrates the different actors, the originated initiatives and collaborations (shown by arrows) between the three different fields: Public organisations, Nature- and Landscape conservation and leisure cluster. All actors are represented in the regional council (red box). The regional council is the overall organisation which provides direction in regional development. The regional council is chaired by an independent chairman. Spatial planning decisions are made in consultation with members wherein the province gives direction. On the left the public organisations, wherein Vrijetijdshuis Brabant act as a public organisation which do research and gives advises too the leisure entrepreneur and province. Province and municipalities collaborate in the field of spatial planning focused on the exchange of knowledge. Also nature- and landscape conservation organisations work together with the various fields. Within the different fields originated collaboration platforms were actors can register and participate. These platforms can be seen as a representative body. An example is the platform BrabantStad. This organisation is an initiative of the public organisations (province and municipalities), which focuses on the exchange of knowledge about accessibility of the province. In the leisure cluster three collaboration platforms respectively; cooperative “Het Groene Woud”, TOP Brabant and Leisure Boulevard represent the entrepreneur on several aspects such as cooperation, development possibilities and marketing. The individual organisations are (nature- and landscape conservation) Natuurmonumenten and Brabants Landschap.

By investigating regional governance of “Het Groene Woud” four platforms could be distinguished, each with a perspective and interest. Respectively exchange of knowledge or representative or specific field such as marketing each with different perspectives and interests such as development in promotion of the region at local, regional national or international level to increase visitor numbers became clear. Other perspectives are the mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature, improve connectivity of the bigger cities Tilburg, ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Eindhoven and improve cooperation between actors. The various perspectives and visions are based on development, driven by opportunities or constrains from practise (TOP Brabant).

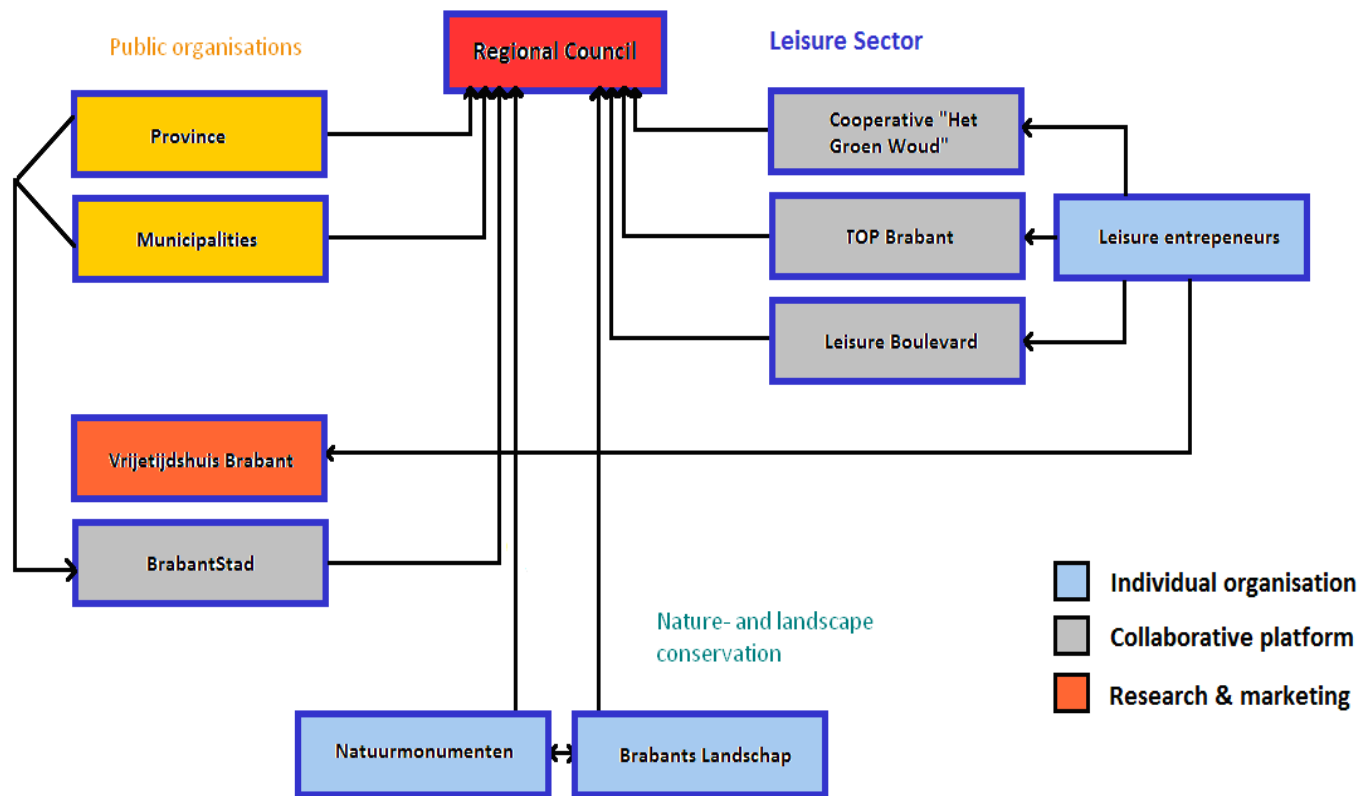


Figure 7 Cooperation of actors

1. Regional council “Het Groene Woud” (increase nature and recreation qualities)

The regional council is the overarching authoritative in “Het Groene Woud”, wherein the above mentioned actors public and private are united (illustrated by arrows in figure 7) and play a role in formulation and implementation of policies in the region. Figure 8 illustrates the organogram of the regional council “Het Groene Woud”. Together they work on regional development. The regional council set direction in activities in “Het Groene Woud” mainly focused on nature and recreation. Their perspective is to increase the qualities in the region “Het Groene Woud”. The council meets four times a year. The role of the regional council is to work according to established policies, reshape perspectives of various actors in “Het Groene Woud”. The executive committee is responsible for final decision making. The Regional Council is chaired by an independent chairman. The relevant actors which are in direct relation of this study are elaborated above, for a complete list of representatives see appendix 1. The regional council started some initiatives such as “Streekrekening and Cooperation “Het Groene Woud” further elaboration below.

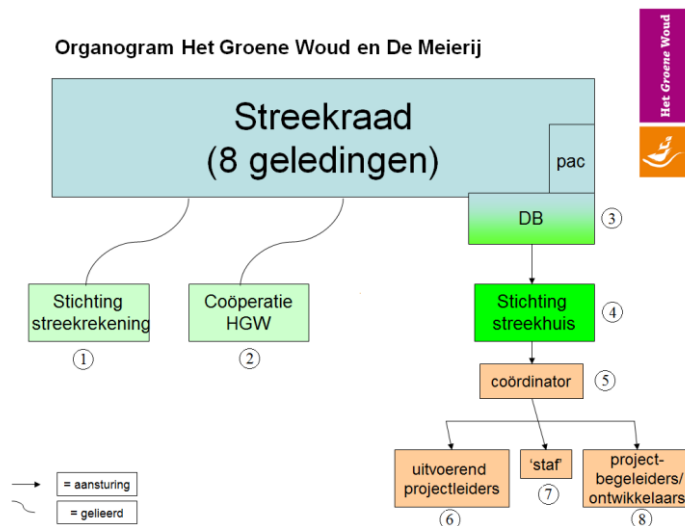


Figure 8 Organogram regional council "Het Groene Woud" (alliance broker of the region, 2013).

2. BrabantStad (improve accessibility & international recognition)

In 2001 the province of North-Brabant together with the cities Breda, Eindhoven, Helmond, 's-Hertogenbosch and Tilburg has established a network. This network is named by "BrabantStad". Cities and province work together on an equal basis and keep their own autonomy (brabantstad.nl). BrabantStad promotes, connects and collaborates in the leisure business. The cooperation between province, cities, universities and business intends to create a strong internationally competitive province in knowledge and innovation in the clusters: economy, ecology and human (BrabantStad). An example is that the organisation intends to improve the accessibility and international recognition of the cities, which can be connected to tourism and recreation. One of the main aims is to improve connectivity between cities and the provision of alternative modes of transport ([nirrov.platform31](http://nirrov.platform31.nl)). This organisation is intent to promote the province on an international scale, but at the same time intent to achieve and preserve the qualities in the living environment.

3. Cooperative "Het Groene Woud" (collaboration leisure sector)

This initiative is committed to collaboration between companies in the leisure cluster which feel connected to National landscape "Het Groene Woud" such as restaurants, hotels, cafes, recreation entrepreneurs etc. The organisation can be seen as a collaboration platform where actors can exchange knowledge. The main objective is to strive for a strong regional brand ("Het Groene Woud"), created in collaboration with the united organisations. The brand has to contribute to a strong Leisure economy. The cooperative offers its members opportunities to start new activities which contribute to strengthening and maintaining environmental values such as initiatives that contribute to the conservation and development of the varied landscape. This includes for example the production of regional products such as food (bread, juices, syrups, cakes, ham, sausages and jams) or wooden products, such as clogs. The entrepreneurs committed to this platform are certified by a logo.

4. TOP Brabant (cooperation & development leisure economic perspective)

TOP Brabant is an initiative of the branch organizations: RECRON, HISWA, KHN Netherlands, Southern Agriculture and Horticulture Organization (ZLTO) and the Chambers of Commerce (KvK) in North-Brabant. TOP Brabant is a platform, for the entrepreneur in the leisure cluster. TOP stands for “Toeristische Ondernemers Platform” (touristic, entrepreneurs, platforms). TOP Brabant give input and expertise to entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster. TOP Brabant aims to maintain, enhance and develop the potentials of innovative, attractive tourism and recreation in North-Brabant (topbrabant.nl) by means of conjoin organisations (for example: Vrijetijdshuis Brabant and Leisure Boulevard), focusing on joining strengths and qualities in the cluster by means of the reshape of perspectives between different branches in the leisure cluster. Table 1 illustrates the main roles, ambitions, collaborations and perspectives between the relevant actors for this study.

Table 1 Actors, roles, ambitions and cooperation.

Actors:	Roles:	Main ambitions:	Main cooperation:	Perspective
Province	Division of attention (provincial area agenda) Providing of subsidies Guidance to all actors by the provision of provincial visions	Environmental objectives (provincial identity, nature conservation) Social objectives (cooperation between actors) Economic objectives (business climate)	All actors	Development of the regional economy and conservation and preservation of spatial characteristics of the region. intent to find a balance between these orientations
Municipalities	Provide subsidies enforcement legislations Development plan Accountability province, main work domain: urban areas	Strengthen Local identity, business climate and living environment	Province, business and individuals	Develop tourism and recreation local level. Attract visitors and improve their income in tourism and recreation.
Regional council “Het Groene Woud” (cooperative hetgroenewoud)	Direction on: area development, process director cooperation and advice, main work domain: central zone of the region	Strengthen qualities in region, commitment between perspectives, regional branding	All actors	Increase the qualities in the region “Het Groene Woud”. Strong regional brand (“Het Groene Woud”) created in collaboration with the united organisations. The brand has to contribute to a strong Leisure economy.
TOP Brabant	Input & expertise: cooperation, coordination in alignment perspectives	Maintain, enhance and develop the potentials of attractive tourism & recreation	Entrepreneurs in the leisure	Develop the potentials of attractive tourism and recreation,

Formulate preconditions				conjoin organisations.
Vrijetijds huis Brabant	Provide figures and facts of leisure cluster for entrepreneurs and province, advices on policies	Promotion entrepreneurs in the leisure and province	Province, entrepreneurs in the leisure	Development in tourism and recreation in the province. Attract visitors by providing information via social media "Without visitors there is no research"
BrabantStad	Lobbing state and Europe Providing strategic agenda Coordinate, facilitate cooperation	Strong internationally competitive province and a sustainable growing urban network	Europe, State Province and Municipalities	Improve the accessibility and international recognition of the cities
Leisure Boulevard	Strengthen cooperation	Promotion regional, local identity and the leisure in the region, double amount of visitors in 2025	Province, municipality, education and business	Increase cooperation on a regional national and international scale in order to increase support at different levels and increase status (attract visitors).
Natuurmonumenten & Brabants Landschap	Advices on policies Maintenance of nature areas, central nature areas in the region	Conserve, identity nature areas, safe recreation	Province, municipalities, leisure cluster	Conserve nature and promote the potentials and benefits of nature in order to preserve or increase recreation quality. In means to mitigate visitor impact on the environment.

4.4 Policy analysis

The previous paragraphs elaborate on the operating actors in the field of spatial planning land- and nature conservation and leisure cluster are discussed. Figure 7 illustrates the collaboration between the actors and different platforms there can be stated that a diverse set of actors with various perspectives and interests come together in formulation and implementation of policies. This paragraph will give an elaboration of the policy analysis in which a document study is used. The relevant documents in the field of “spatial planning”, “nature- and landscape conservation” and “leisure cluster” are analysed. This paragraph represents an overview of the most important established policies and initiatives. The next chapter will elaborate on which policy related measures have been implemented in the region (Field observations).

4.4.1 Institutionalized perspectives (policies & plans)

Development vision “Het Groene Woud” 2011-2025 (regional council “Het Groene Woud”)

The area “Het Groene Woud” has its own regional council, streekrekening (financial account) and an area cooperative. Since 2010 the region belongs to one of the provincial integrated area development projects (provincial structural RO 2010). This means that the province wants to work in cooperation with the regional council on a development-oriented approach, aimed strengthening the spatial characteristics, experience of the landscape and to improve the regional economy. This means maintaining and strengthening the balance between the three P's "people, planet and profit": The key challenges for the 3 P's are:

- Profit: stimulate entrepreneurship;
- Planet: a very varied nature;
- People: a special experience for visitors and residents.

In the development vision 2011-2025 of the regional council, the following points are central:

- *Branding “Het Groene Woud”;*
- *Better cooperation between companies in the leisure cluster;*
- *Creation of one clear house style, which must serve as passport which strengthen the identity and recognition of the region several focus points of the house style:*
 - *Everywhere the same story is told;*
 - *in the same way;*
 - *in the same and therefore recognizable form;*
 - *on the same tone.*

The house style has an important signalling function to the brand “Het Groene Woud” (regional council “Het Groene Woud”). The house style is invented for companies which are involved in cooperative “Het Groene Woud” (see also actor analysis). Figure 9 illustrates the house style logo and descriptive words.



Figure 9 House style logo and descriptive words (regional council “Het Groene Woud”).

For the implementation and realization of the above mentioned points the regional council pay attention to:

- *“A new approach for the realization of nature and landscape values (quality improvement in management and procedures);*
- *The realization of a limited number of projects related to increase recognition. Projects that have an integrated approach and perhaps even an provincial or (inter) national effect;*
- *Structural cooperation between public organisations, natural and agricultural organizations and other social organizations, individuals and businesses. The aim of this cooperation is the realization of projects that contribute to the joint ambition for the area”.*

Initiative of “Het Groene Woud” streekrekening, finance for projects

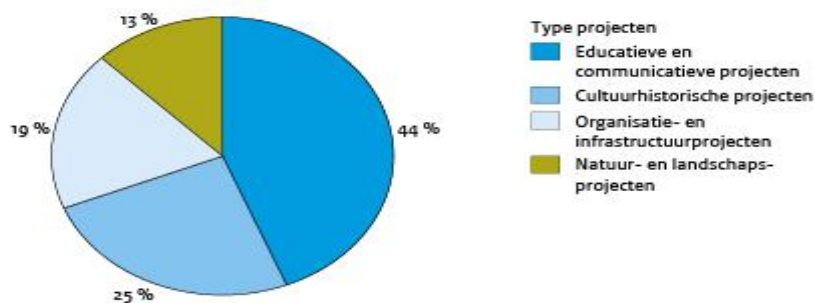
Since January 2008 is established a so called “streekrekening” (account for the finance of projects in “Het Groene Woud”. “Het Groene Woud” is known as a region with the largest regional fund in the Netherlands. The project budget is € 275,000 per year. Some examples of projects are given below (Plan bureau voor de Leefomgeving). According to regional council “Het Groene Woud”: *“the streekrekening is an ingenious concept to release funds for sustainable projects in Het Groene Woud”*. The regional fund (streekfonds) and the Rabo Streekrekening “Het Groene Woud” are the two main pillars of the “Streekrekening”. The regional fund is the account for the financial support of initiatives. The main way to fill the regional fund is the saving system of the Rabo Streekrekening. Besides the saving system, there are many other ways that contribute to the filling of the regional fund, consider gifts, sponsorship and donations from participants. The account intends to fund a diverse range of initiatives and projects of actors in “Het Groene Woud” (figure 10). The regional fund pursues the following general objectives:

- Conservation, restoration and increase of biodiversity in “Het Groene Woud”;
- Conservation and restoration of cultural heritage values in “Het Groene Woud”;
- Conservation and restoration of landscape values in “Het Groene Woud”;
- Promoting agricultural, recreational and other economic activities that contribute to the previous objectives.

Some examples:

- Realization of nature;
- Development of sustainable agriculture and horticulture;
- Developing sustainable recreational / tourist structure;
- Protect and develop characteristic landscape;
- Recovery for drought prone areas;
- improve water quality and quantity;
- Reducing eutrophication and acidification;
- Prevention of urbanization pressure.

Goedgekeurde projecten uit opbrengst streekrekening Het Groene Woud, 2007 – 2010



Bron: Website Stichting Streekrekening Het Groene Woud.

www.pbl.nl

Figure 10 Established project from "streekrekening" (stichting streekrekening Het Groene Woud).

Policy & Implementation plan Leisure Economy 2013- 2020

In previous years, the province North-Brabant was the only province in the Netherlands which did not have a political binding document for tourism, recreation and leisure. In order to keep overview in trends and development the province pointed Vrijetijdshuis Brabant to research the annual figures of tourism and recreation. The province invested in organisations which intent to improve the structure of organisations in the leisure cluster (for instance cooperative "Het Groene Woud"). In 2010 the province had a budget of € 1.850.000, - for tourism, recreation and leisure cluster which comprises 0.3 % of the total estimate budget of the province. According to the studies of Vrijetijdshuis Brabant: *"these numbers of investment are noticeable internal and external"*. Internally, is given less attention to counselling other departments of recreation and tourism. External parties such as leisure entrepreneurs experience a lack of direct contact where tourism and recreation policy is coordinated.

Current developments

Recently there has been established a collaboration between 20 municipalities in North-East Brabant. During the political meeting in 2010 was decided to collaborate between the different fields of activities. In the field of Tourism and Recreation, this has resulted in the establishment of a regional tourism & recreation vision. Public organisations, entrepreneurs and education request the province to facilitate development in the leisure cluster. Together they constructed "the Policy and Implementation Plan Leisure Economy 2020". The plan was handed over to the Committee Economic Affairs (EZ) in February 2013. The plan intends to develop the smaller public organisations and projects aim for national and international recognition. An example is the organisations Leisure Boulevard and BrabantStad. Some numbers out of the "Policy and implementation plan Leisure economy 2020": Every year, € 5.3 billion is spent to vacations in the province North-Brabant. There are 100,000 jobs in the leisure cluster, mainly for secondary and lower education. That is about 9% of the total employment. The ambition is to grow to 130,000 jobs and an expense of € 6 billion in 2020, which mean a growth of 10%. End February 2013 the plan is accepted by the province. Within the three coming year 6 million euro will be invested in the Leisure economy. The main goal can be translate into the following sub-goals, the province wants to ensure:

- *"Increase national and international visitors. The focus is to strengthening the regular offerings such as catering, accommodation sites, nature with for example an international recognizable theme or story. In addition, there will be deployed on broadening the market and new target groups such as seniors and single parent families;*
- *Increase visitors' expenditures and duration of stay in the region. This in means of the development of new product-market combinations, where there is more room for art and culture, (sports) events, urban leisure concepts and the short break market.*
- *Strengthening the top and regular leisure facilities by cross-over's, storytelling and concepts lead to innovations and new product-market combinations;*
- *Developing of hospitality that distinguishes the province, both in the top as well as in the regular leisure providers (examples: accessibility and welcoming);*
- *Put in order the basis of tourism and recreation, including information, infrastructure and marketing".*

Kadernota toerisme en recreatie 2003-2010

Municipalities are involved in tourism and recreation. The tourism & recreation plan of the cities s-Hertogenbosch and Tilburg have been analysed. When it comes to tourism and recreation, municipalities would like to invest in a regional approach (Valentina, 2009). This approach perfectly fits with the plans of the province (clearer profile of the different Brabant regions). Additionally mentioned in "kadernota toerisme en recreatie 2003-2010" (municipality of Tilburg): *"Local tourism policy has important linkages with the tourism policy in the region"*. Within this plan several policies are mentioned, the main challenges were:

- *"Delivering on the preconditions for successful tourism policy: tourism policy in Tilburg is still in its infancy. Embedding of tourism and recreation in the municipal organisation and cooperation with regional municipalities and the tourism industry is also necessary. Also, understanding the development of the behaviour of the tourist town indispensable for product development. This will also provide insight into the impact of tourism policy.*

- *Tourism infrastructure: ensuring vital tourist facilities such as accommodation, signage.*
- *Product development: a quality boost to the current tourist and recreation facilities;*
- *Promotion of the tourist offer in Tilburg”.*

Another important task of municipalities is the management of events. The organisation of events does have a clear linkage with small scale visitor management. According to the municipality of ‘s-Hertogenbosch: *“the municipality has an active tourist development plan. The aim is:*

- *Increasing the economic importance of tourism, including employment;*
- *Preservation and improvement of the regional, national and international visitors market. (regional: 2.7 mln. national: 2.2 mln. International: 10%, business visits: 10%);*
- *The development of a quality culture touristic product;*
- *Conduct an adequate visitor management;*
- *Traffic management by events”.*

Vision Tourism & Recreation North-east Brabant (Vrijetijdshuis Brabant)

In the tourism and recreation vision from Vrijetijdshuis Brabant are emphasized three elements, cross boundary, expansion and uniqueness. These points are comparable with those from other actors. Elaborated below are the elements and the motive.

- Cross borders; plans should not be blocked by local, regional and national boundaries. It became necessary (due to the amount of different plans) to look beyond the local and regional borders. Join actors and align plans and ideas;
- Expansion; the coherence and alignment of the leisure cluster offer, can be improved by up-scaling. Identify and connect the bigger potential themes and initiatives on local and regional level. The up-scaling and marketing oriented view will give an impulse on recognition and tourism and recreation offers in the region;
- Uniqueness; Emphasize on the important icons in the region. These icons may serve as steppingstones for the smaller projects and the distinguish ability of the icons in the region, which serve for recognition.

“Uitinbrabant” searching machine for the visitor

“Uit in Brabant” is an initiative established by the tourist office (VVV) and Vrijetijdshuis Brabant. It is a search machine on internet, where all attractive leisure activities are bundled and promoted. The searching machine is divided in three main themes, events, locations and routes, including the following aspects: culture, art, music, events, market, film, cycling, sports, theatre, hiking, workshop etc.

“Knowledge centre & inspiring entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster” (kennispleinvrijetijd.nl)

For inspiring entrepreneurs and the assembling of knowledge of the leisure cluster in North-Brabant, Vrijetijdshuis Brabant came with a website where all facts and figures about leisure in the province can be found (www.kennispleinvrijetijd.nl). This knowledge centre is intent to keep overview and to observe changes and fluctuations. Additionally, it may inspire and help entrepreneurs (Vrijetijdshuis Brabant.nl).

Strategic Agenda BrabantStad 2012-2020

In the vision of BrabantStad is stated that they would like evolve into a coherent urban area with a robust green structure in which 1.4 million people live. It is important to keep urbanization in the cities and conserve the countryside. Intended is to keep the contrast between urban and rural intact. In relation to nature and recreation, BrabantStad aims to realize a green mold around the bigger cities, in order to keep the contrast between city and countryside visible and to maintain and provide space for recreation. Additionally, they aim to improve the cultural & leisure activities in the province by means of the realization of new museums and commitment of international events. BrabantStad aims to grow to be the capital of culture in Europe.

Leisure Cluster

TOP Brabant tourism and recreation within the leisure cluster in 2020

The organisation TOP Brabant has constructed a vision for the future of tourism and recreation in the province North-Brabant. This notion exists of a common vision for the province (TOP Brabant). TOP Brabant would like to focus on the creation of connections and cooperation, firstly between different fields in province and municipalities such as spatial planning and the economy sector. Secondly, companies and association in the leisure cluster. The main purposes are to create more opportunities for entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster and space for promotion and marketing. These opportunities can be created by shortening planning procedures. The leisure cluster experience stagnation in development, due to the length of planning procedures. According to TOP Brabant: *“planning procedures take currently far too long (between 5-7 years). This leads to inertia in the cluster, large hinders in market orientation of the cluster and innovation in entrepreneurship. It leads to significant entrepreneurial and social costs, which have not been recognised by the government”*. This duration have to be reduced; otherwise entrepreneurs fail to provide the required change they would like to make. The following action points are highlighted in the vision:

- *“Shortening planning procedures;*
- *Start (administrative) consultations with the cooperating municipalities;*
- *Anchoring tourism and leisure as provincial interest;*
- *Development of a provincial and regional promotion vision”.*

Dreamport Brabant 2025 (Leisure Boulevard)

Midpoint-Brabant is dedicated to the cooperation in the region that encourages and stimulates cooperation between local authorities (municipalities), educational, research institutions and industry, which forms a unique power (midpointbrabant.nl). Within this organisation, Leisure Boulevard is the branch that focuses on the leisure economy in the region. As mentioned, Leisure Boulevard focuses on the strengthening of the business climate and international place branding, by concentrating on the promotion of international reputation and distinctive product development, which provides a sort of attraction (interview, promoter region). Leisure Boulevard introduced a business plan so called, “Dreamport 2025”. The purpose of Leisure Boulevard is to double the amount of visitors in the region. This means that the region will receive 20 million visitors a year. In order to achieve this number they highlighted in their vision four lines of orientations:

- Content: strengthen current recreation offer (presenting and distribution);
- Hospitality: improvement of residential quality (accommodation and catering);
- Connection: creation of cooperation structures between actors;
- Green & nature: landscape improvement, recognition strengthen distinctiveness.

Initiative

Profiling for recognition” (Brabant recreatief)

Entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster have several options to join initiatives, which aim to promote. The organisation “Brabant Recreatief” has introduced a so called “TPC” (Totaal Promotieel Concept) for entrepreneurs, which focuses on the leisure cluster in nature areas. The intent of the concept is profiling the nature area of the concerned entrepreneur, by focusing on media. Brabant recreatief focuses on a smaller scale (compared with Leisure Boulevard and TOP Brabant) such as place promotion and recognition (the direct tourist attractions). The TPC exist of five elements, which are in combination enhancing each other. The elements are:

- Tourist Magazine (static information);
- Portal website (dynamic information);
- Remarkable points (static and dynamic information);
- Infrastructure (recreational network: wireless infrastructure);
- Services.

According to the actor and policy analysis can be stated that there are various cooperation structures between actors in formulation and implementation of policies in “Het Groene Woud”. As shown in the policy analysis, a diverse range of visions and plans are written for the region. Table 2 illustrates the main perspectives which are established in the analysed policy documents.

Table 2 Comparison perspective & established policies

Platform:	Perspective:	Established policies:
Regional council	Improve nature and recreation qualities. Regional branding ("Het Groene Woud") Create collaboration with the united organisations	-Branding "Het Groene Woud" -Creation of clear house style -Cooperation between organisations
BrabantStad	Improve accessibility & international recognition	-Capital of culture in Europe -Conserve countryside keep urbanization in cities. -Realization of green mold around the cities
Cooperative "Het Groene Woud"	Collaboration leisure sector	-Structural cooperation between public organisations, social organizations, individuals and businesses.
Top Brabant	Cooperation & development leisure sector Develop the potentials of attractive tourism and recreation, conjoin organisations.	-Creation of connection and cooperation between actors. -Space for promotion and marketing in leisure sector. -Shortening planning procedures

Table 2 is an elaboration of the four main perspectives in regional governance of "Het Groene Woud", exposed with the established policies identified during the policy analysis. Regarded the policies can be stated that the focus is related to the attraction of visitors and less to emphasize uniqueness of the region or regulating visitors (spatial projects). There can be stated that perspectives are comparable with the established policies and there is some overlap, however there are diverse interpretation possibilities of policies such as "branding" and "identity". Identity and branding can be interpreted from a marketing point of view or spatial point of view (emphasizing the uniqueness of the region). In other words it will be difficult to translate the established policy such as branding or creation of cooperation into actions in practice.

4.5 Policy related measures in the region

This paragraph elaborates on policy related measures which have been implemented in the region. The analysis is preformed according to the five components of visitor management: “signalling”, “inform”, “navigate”, “concentrate” and “accommodate”. The implemented initiatives and projects which have a direct link with visitors will be also mentioned. The policy related measures are mentioned in table 3 pg. 60. Regard to this table, there are many policies and measures related to the promotion and increase of recognition of the region which are implemented by diverse actors each with an own house style.

“Signalling”

The region is known as attractive for living, working, and recreation. According to regional council “Het Groene Woud”: *“the name “Het Groene Woud” has great added economic value to the region”*. Hereby the region became attractive for leisure businesses, which served to economic growth (regional council “Het Groene Woud, Leisure Boulevard”). The province North-Brabant is committed to proclaim the province by the three following words gezellig, gastvrij and bourgondisch (cosy, hospitable and burgundian). These names can be seen as a welcome, courtesy call (employee Vrijetijdshuis Brabant) (see also policies of the province). Since the province pay attention to identity and image improvement, the following organisations and platforms intents to promote the name “Het Groene Woud”: cooperative “Het Groene Woud”, TOP Brabant. Branding regions are mostly related to specific economic aims. Stated by promoter region (interview): *“the promotion should attract visitors and increase the leisure economy in the region”*. Also on smaller scale initiatives are originated which aim to improve the experience of the visitor, this by for example the promotion of doing activities, discovers, feel and smell. Such promotion can be found on the websites of “natuurmonumenten.nl” and “hetgroenewoud.com”. Another example is the available regional products.

When it comes to branding a province for instance North-Brabant, there are always smaller areas, and communities located within a region (regio-hartvanbrabant.nl). Also the case-study region exists of different sub-areas which in turn also carry a granted name. Mostly these names represent the characteristics of that place or area. The names of smaller sub-areas can be understood as a tactic to brand or mark a certain place. People get curious and attracted, wherein place meaning and place attachment (sense of place) is created. Actors have their own identity and house style in for example the shape and colours of signs (routes boards). The following main names are used in the region by the different actors: “Hart van Brabant”, “Midden-Brabant”, “Het Groene Woud”, “Leisure Boulevard”, and “de Langstraat” wherein the smaller areas such as “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen” “Oisterwijkse Forest and Meres” also carry a name and belong to the region. There can be stated that these names are a proclaiming of different perspectives of diverse actors as is explained previously. The following section will discuss in which way the actors give meaning to the concepts in spatial aspect. For the publication of the use of names among the various actors, several signs are situated along popular roads (figure 11).



Figure 11 Area advertisement boards

Along the bigger roads in the region such as the A2 and A58 several provincial area advertisement boards are placed (figure 11). According to the chairman of the committee: *“these brown-white boards along the highways will serve to create a greater awareness of our area. Additionally, the brown signs will ensure that consumers seek out the area”*. These boards are an initiative of the province, Rijkswaterstaat and ANWB. These spatial measures are in relation to the promotion of the region or specific areas. Less emphasize is given to the implementation of spatial measures (such as accentuate the landscape icons) to do justice to the dedicated names. The project “Natuurpoorten” is related to promotion with the underlying motivation to spread visitors. Vrijetijdshuis Brabant is committed by the realization of Natuurpoorten. A “natuurpoort” forms the entrance (gateway) to a forest or nature area where visitors can park their car for further recreation. These gateways also exist of cafes, restaurants or a visitor centre. The intent is to achieve 30 “Natuurpoorten” between 2012 and 2015. Because of the recognition they are placed in a big iron key in front of the gateways (figure 12). These gateways are popular nodes in the region where the visitor will find a wide range of amenities: parking, catering facilities and information about the nature, cultural and recreational routes. According to leisure researcher (interview): *“a network of nature gates will stimulate the use, whereby simultaneously vulnerable nature is conserved. Because, it serves zoning and regulation of visitor flows”*. Vrijetijdshuis Brabant together with the responsible area brokers, TOP Brabant, land and nature managers, and entrepreneurs in the leisure determines if a location meets the requirements to be qualified as “Natuurpoort”. Some criteria are: located within 300 meters of a nature reserve, the starting point for various route structures, easily accessible and ample parking, presence of catering and space to offer information about nature and routes. According to Vrijetijdshuis Brabant (interview, leisure researcher): *“this project consistent to marketing and promotional campaign of the province North-Brabant”*. The application of a uniform name, provision of information and house style will provide recognition. The project is financed by the province of North-Brabant. In April 2013 ten gateways are designated and have been realised. With regard to the five elements of visitor management this project have clear connection two all of the components.



Figure 12 Natuurpoort (vrijetijdshuisbrabant.nl).

“Informing & navigate”

The question which has derived, which aspects or elements in space have been implemented and contribute to improvement of landscape characteristics/icons (in order to give meaning to granted names) and visitor management? To inform visitors in the region different visitor information centres are cited in the region (see below). These visitor centres belongs to the Natuurpoorten. The information centres provide the visitor information about walking and cycling routes, workshops, excursions as well as promotion of other touristic places. Different flyers maps, books are provided. The networks of routes are connected on provincial, national and international level (interview, leisure researcher). Additionally these centres provide educational information about nature and cultural history. Examples of cultural historical stories and monuments in national park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen are”; “het kruis bij de verlaten dassenburcht”, “het monument bij de Distelberg”, “het Udenhouts Mariakapelletje”, “het monument bij Bosch en Duin” and “het Vredesmonument in Kaatsheuvel”. There are several cycling routes with a specific theme such as religion, art or cultural heritage. These centres can be found on websites of land- and nature managers. The region has seven different information centres which are located at gateways of the nature areas:

- Boxtel (De Groene Poort, prehistory museum in Boxtel);
- Eindhoven (Philips Fruittuin, orchard near Eindhoven);
- Haaren (BallonAIRpoort, on the terrain of Pergama Landjuweel);
- 's-Hertogenbosch (Bastionder);
- Oisterwijk Klein Oisterwijk (near camping De Boskant);
- Natuurmonumenten Oisterwijk (in the middle of the Kampina);
- Schijndel (company Winery & Herbs);
- Tilburg (Café Zomerlust located in Moerenburg).

National Park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen” is a large area in the region with many different gateways. These gateways are connected by cycling and walking routes which guide the visitor along numerous cafes, restaurants and hotels (interview, nature manager). However, the national park has no visitor centre. In order to inform visitors, most gateways have an information panel showing a map of the area with hiking and cycling trail information (figure 13). There are also specially trained hosts (32st.) which will inform the visitor about the unique aspects and activities in the park. These hosts are recreation entrepreneurs, which wear special facade sign. Besides that, in the seven visitor information centres, information can be found about the national park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen”.

Besides the information boards at the different starting points, several other signs are situated in the environment. For example: the so called “ANWB paddenstoelen”, which give the visitor information about direction and distance. Beside the information signs for cyclers, there are plenty other instructions for instance the bridle-ways or hiking and MTB- routes (figure 13).

Figure 13 Information panels & signs

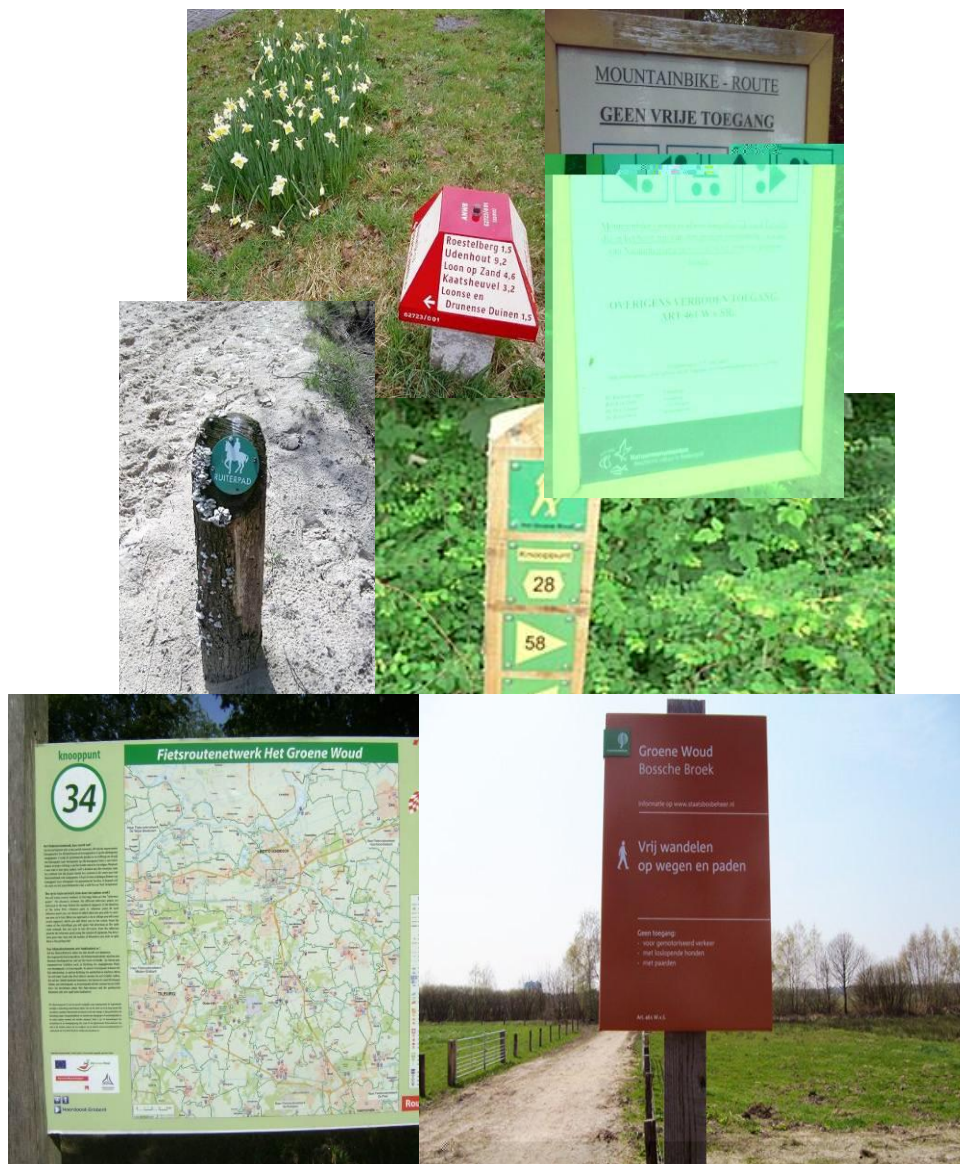




Figure 15 Expertise map Het Groene Woud (destadalsattractie.nl).

The province of North-Brabant will put effort on the capacity of the provincial road the N261 (road between Waalwijk and Tilburg). This road is used intensely by visitors of national park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen” and leisure park “de Efteling”. Anno 2013, the capacity is insufficient, which effects safety and nature objectives (air, noise pollution). In the upcoming three years there will be worked on improvement of the capacity, traffic flow and safety of the road. In compensation will be realized an ecoduct, which connects estate Huis ter Heide and the dunes (brabant.nl). In addition, there will be realized 26 hectares of new nature. The province acquires land, Natuurmonumenten becomes owner and manager (brabant.nl). With regard to the accommodation and concentration of visitors, the province spends effort to hospitality, whereby accessibility belongs to. There are several actors active in catering, which will benefit if the number of visitors will increase in coming years. Since this number will increase these accommodation facilities will become more important which can functions to spread the visitor over the region whereby vulnerable areas will be conserved (interview, nature manager).

Table 3 Policy related measures

Administrative layers:	Policies:	Measures:
Provincial level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Branding “Het Groene Woud” -Developing of hospitality that distinguishes the province, both in the top as well as in the regular leisure providers -Put in order the basis of tourism and recreation, including information, infrastructure and marketing. 	Names and regional advertisement boards, infrastructure improvement, N261
Regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creation of one clear house style, which must serve as passport which strengthen the identity and recognition of the region -Tourism infrastructure: ensuring vital tourist facilities such as accommodation, signage 	Natuurpoorten (30st.), themes (storytelling): cultural history, projects of the “streekrekening” (identity), house style “Het Groene Woud”, area information centres and boards walking cycling routes, hosts, activity book
Local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Storytelling and concepts lead to innovations and new product-market combinations -Increase visitors’ expenditures and duration of stay in the region. This in means of the development of new product-market combinations, where there is more room for art and culture, (sports) events, urban leisure concepts and the short break market 	Local products, promotion of entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster, TPC, announcement alternative recreation opportunities “Het Groene Woud” Logo

4.5.1 Spatial consequences

The implemented spatial measures have often to do with the promotion of the region “Het Groene Woud” and guidance of the visitor as is shown in table 3 pg. 60, which can be referred to the established perspectives in table 2 pg. 52. The focus means that actors use different names and stories in the region. This is expressed by an overkill of different styles of signs in the region (interview, nature manager). The signage systems are often implemented by different organisations such as the signage of walking or cycling routes placed by Natuurmonumenten and Brabants Landschap. With regard to the number and size of signs from the bigger organisation such as ANWB and staatsbosbeheer, it can be stated that these organisations are predominating. According to the alliance broker of the region (interview): *“within the park rises the risk of an overkill of information”*. According to the nature manager (interview): *“the park Loonse and Drunense Duinen occur an abundance of uncontrolled signage, except that it will lead to confusion it will also not contribute to our image”*. The regional council “Het Groene Woud” does recognize this problem and aims to create a clear house style as explained in previous chapter. However, this is not visible in space yet.

The policy analysis shows that attention is given to the promotion of the region and sub-areas and less emphasize is given to reflection on spatial consequences of these ambitions related to visitors but also to the conservation of nature and landscape. An example is the capacity of the tourism infrastructure such as access roads and parking facilities. During the field observation days became clear that the access routes and parking places of popular starting points of nature areas as well as those of leisure parks are often intensely used during the weekends (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety). Cars are parked in both verges of the road, whereby the road is blocked for emergency services. What you see is that visitors which are well known in the area return to places they like most, which results in crowded places. Therefore the land and nature managers suggest that actors in the leisure as well as the province should promote alternative leisure opportunities, with the underlying motivation to spread the visitors over the region. However, the announcements of alternatives are still not visible in space and the parking capacity of alternative places is questionable (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety).

Different names for the region as a whole and for the sub-areas are used (Leisure Boulevard, Hart-van Brabant, Midden-Brabant). The use of names should serve to connect people but when there are used too many names, it will lead to confusion (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety). The names are representing regions or areas however the imagination one has with a name and spatial existence is incoherent. An example is that the leisure researcher mentioned during the interview that the name “Het Groene Woud” does not represent in what the region has to offer. A “Woud” is associated with hectares of forest which lead to disappointment. In addition, the boards along highways are not situated near forest. Thereby, the illustration on the boards represents a cow and a farm. The natural association is thereby incorrect. Since the region carries several names it might not only confuse the actors but also the visitor, because they are overloaded with names and also incorrect names which will not contribute to the image of the region. Regarding from another perspective, the use of several names means a diverse range of actors which are operating in the same area, which can be related to a diverse range of attractive places.

5. Zoom in & link

The actor analysis and policy analysis gave more insights in roles, perspectives, interest and cooperation between actors in formulation and implementation of policies. In regional governance of “Het Groene Woud” four platforms are involved in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies each with a perspective and interest. The platforms are united in a regional council which tries to set direction to development in the region (interview, alliance broker of the region). Platforms are active in the exchange of knowledge or representative or specific field such as marketing. The perspectives and interest(s) can be traced to the construction of meaning to a place which is explained in the theoretical framework. In general four different perspectives can be distinguished: (1) development in promotion of the region at local, regional, national or international level to increase the visitor numbers. This is an economic perspective. (2) Mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature (conserve perspective), (3) improvement of connectivity of the bigger cities Tilburg, ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Eindhoven and (4) improve cooperation between actors. These main perspectives are compared with the established policies in order to define which perspectives are translated to policies and to identify dominant perspectives. Table 2 pg. 52 illustrates the perspectives and established policies.

Regarding the policies it can be stated that the focus is related to the attraction of visitors. The policy analysis shows that the province in cooperation with the leisure cluster focuses mainly on the economic aspects of tourism and recreation, by the creation of brand awareness in order to attract more visitors in the region. Also the perspective “improvement of connectivity of the bigger cities” is supported. The economic focus can be explained by the fact that the province supports the economic initiatives such as “Leisure Boulevard” in the cluster tourism and recreation. The perspective “mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature” do not clearly come back in policies. The cooperation perspective is difficult to measure since there are no specific measures to notice. In overall, can be stated that in regional governance of “Het Groene Woud” imperfections in cooperation and coordination of perspectives influences formulation and implementation of visitor management policies. Responsive to the fact that the economic perspective plays a dominant role in formulation of policies in regional governance of “Het Groene Woud”. The established policies in the region are related to this economic perspective, while the conservation perspective disappears in policies.

Policies, perspectives and concepts

According to the actor analysis can be stated that most actors share a somewhat similar perspective. All actors aim to work on the regional identity and branding of “Het Groene Woud”. Additionally, there is a broad agreement about better cooperation between actors stated by TOP Brabant and the regional council “Het Groene Woud”. However, perspectives, ideas, approaches of the realisation of plans differ among actors and stagnate. Stated by the alliance broker of the region (interview): *“within the park rises the risk of an overkill of information”*. Also stated by the nature manager (interview): *“the park Loonse and Drunense Duinen occur an abundance of uncontrolled signage, which will lead to confusion and does not contribute to our image”*. Another example is the interpretation of “identity improvement”. For example land and nature managers would like to work on the conservation of identity, this by improvement of landscape characteristics. In comparison with

the perspective of the leisure cluster, they also intent to reshape the identity (promotion and branding) in order to create recognition and distinctiveness however, this perspective is related to economic benefits such as increase the number of visitors in the region. These actors do have the same objective but have other ideas and approaches for the realisation of plans. In general, the perspective on the Leisure sector is based on the creation of recognition in order to increase the number of visitors, while land- and nature managers aim to emphasize the characteristics of the region to increase also recognition but to conserve the characteristics. One may conclude that their construction of place perspectives differ due to their interest. This difference in perspectives also leads to incoherence of the promotion of the sub areas which function in the region (see also chapter four). An example is the use of different names or stories. The use of different names leads to discussions about choosing a general name (interview, alliance broker of the region). An example is that the regional council “Het Groene Woud” advocate for a general house style, while the covering organisation of the leisure sector advocate for brand awareness of a sub-area so called “Leisure Boulevard” which is part of “Het Groene Woud”. This will not benefit to the image of the region (interview, leisure researcher). The use of names and concepts such as “branding” and “identity improvement” can combine people, due the multiple interpretation possibilities a name can serve to convince and find agreement between actors (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). However, it can be stated that actors interpret it differently, due to differences in perspectives, which results in stagnation of policy implementation (transformation of policies into actions).

One of the motives of this study is that the Natuurmonumenten (nature manager) mentioned that there is insufficient knowledge about exact visitor trends in the “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen” in which can be assumed that there is a lack of knowledge about the use of space. Also mentioned, is the insufficient knowledge about the functioning of water systems and ecosystems. This also became clear in the policy analysis. Due to the fact that plans of actors does not exist of a description of spatial consequences in positive or negative sense. The nature manager questions during the interview: *“what about the spatial consequences of a doubling amount of visitors?”* Given the spatial consequences and the mentioned focus point in policies can be stated that there is too little attention for studying the spatial consequences of plans. This might influence policy implementation due to the fact that for example not all actors might agree on the consequences in space when the amount of visitors is doubling.

Since there are numerous actors and collaboration structures and platforms, it means there are various visions and plans for the region, as is shown in the policy analysis. This substantiated by the following statement of the leisure researcher (interview): *“there are plenty of visions and ambitions among the involved actors although clear choices are left, while if you make choices the region will become more distinguishable”*. An overview about visions and plans of actors, similarities and contradictions as well as overlap, is therefore more difficult to get which does not contribute to decision-making and policy implementation (interview, nature manager). This is also the reason why the province stimulates cooperation between different actors (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety). The missing overview in visions and plans influence to get clear what actors want, which affect decision-making and the division of responsibilities.

Another point is the perception between work domains, which can be referred to the perception of for example the extent of nature areas or dedicated names. Since the extent of the region is perceived differently, it becomes hard to determine exact boundaries, due to the different perceptions between work domains. The nature manager mentioned during the interview that the region exists of different sub-areas such as national park “de Loonse & Drunense Duinen” which is seen as their work domain. In other words, the perception on which one have with a region is depend by the field of organisation and the relation one have with the environment (see theoretical framework). Additionally, the designated names by the diverse actors do not contribute to clear determination of extents. This is a clear factor on how an actor perceives the extents and image of the region. Due this phenomenon, work domains are overlapping and boundaries are hard to define. According to policy advisor traffic & road safety (interview): *“we try to minimize hard lines with our work because, different areas overlap and are interconnected.* There can be stated that it became more difficult to split responsibilities since work domains are overlapping (interview, nature manager). According the above phenomena can be stated that the use of names influence confusion in work domains. The different used names affect the perception of work domains and therefore responsibilities (interview, nature manager). This may influence policy implementation. Another aspect of uncertainty mentioned by the nature manager (interview): *“finance for preservation of nature in time of crisis is difficult, because nature is the first cluster where money will be saved. Because the economic benefits can’t be justified, also policies are often vague described which influence the implementation due to the variation of interpretation”.* In addition, since it becomes difficult to estimate cost and benefit actors are afraid of failures which play a role in designating an initiator.

Due to fact that there is a general vision for the region can be stated that there is no problem in policy formulation. Perspectives are comparable with several established policies and we can notice some overlap, however there are diverse interpretation possibilities of policies (reflective to place meaning as is explained in the theoretical framework) and the perspective such as mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature, do not clearly come back in policies (see table 2 pg. 52). Therefore it will be difficult to translate the established policy into actions in practice, because simply not all actors will agree on for example a doubling amount of visitors. It seems that larger organizations became dominant manifested in the fact that not all perspectives are clearly transformed into policies and actions. According to the municipality of Tilburg: *“tourism and recreation has interfaces with many areas such as spatial planning, social development, citypromotion etc. It is therefore inevitable that different departments within the current municipal organisation of tourism working at cross purposes or duplication. If we want to maximize our benefits it is essential to construct a central tourism and recreation policy and a solid organisational structure that binds all parties”.* Since different actors aims to work on better cooperation between actors which is established in policies, it can be stated that they do recognize this phenomenon. Regard to the mentioned spatial consequences in chapter four and the stagnation of application of policies into actions can be stated that the overview between perspectives and alignment of perspectives is missing. Which results in uncertainty about what the current situation of the region is what actors actually want with the region, how to achieve targets and who has to take initiative? Due to the above described situation can be stated that are several barriers in regional governance in “Het Groene Woud”, which stagnates the policy process. The barriers are:

- Lack of knowledge about the use of space (what is the current situation?);
- Lack of knowledge about the spatial consequences of plans;
- Lack of overview visions and plans (what do actors actually want?);
- Lack of overview in cooperation and responsibilities between actors (how to achieve targets?)

As is stated in the problem statement and theoretical framework, in governance the differences in perspectives and visions between actors can act as barriers during formulation and the implementation of policies (Head *et al.*, 2005). When political consensus has been reached, this will not automatically result in an actual application in practice (Jordan & Lenschow, 2010; Nilsson *et al.*, 2009). Policies for visitor management require close coordination with other sectors including infrastructure, leisure economy, environmental conservation and protection and resource management. Because often policy is subjected to change during implementation these other sectors need to be aware of each other and communicate their needs and concerns in order to achieve progress in policy implementation (Younis, 1990). With regard to the results of the study can be stated that these statements match with the situation in the region “Het Groene Woud”.

6. Discussion

Why visitor management in a regional context?

Natuurmonumenten, mentioned the urgent need to find a balance between nature and recreation objectives due to the increasing amount of visitors and the insufficient implementation of measures to control visitor flows at a regional level. According this information is chosen this thesis subject. The study is performed on the basis of the elaborated components of visitor management as is mentioned in chapter three. The components are constructed with the available literature and knowledge about visitor management at park level. The components are deliberated with the interviewees however a discussion or critical feedback about the components has not taken place. Some further research on these components is therefore recommended. In addition to the chosen methodology, the study could also be performed according to an actor network analysis, in which the interaction between actants (actors), power of agency to reshape perspectives of actants (actors) and translatie could have been analysed. It does not mean that the outcome should have been better.

The uniqueness of this research is that it deals both with the evaluation of formulation and implementation of visitor management policies at a regional level in which barriers are researched. The evaluation of tourism policy is rare and recommendations to change or augment systems to make policies actually work and be more accountable are even rarer. Most studies of policies within the frame of tourism have been normative prescriptive studies of what governments should do rather than detailed examinations of what has happened and why. The study showed the importance of the surrounding area of parks, the continuous struggle between perspectives of actors and cooperation in formulation and implementation of visitor management policies, in which the role of perspectives of actors is explained and can results into barriers, which can play a role in formulation and implementation of policies. In this research various public organisations have been interviewed. However, there are no specific local actors such as entrepreneurs in the leisure sector involved during the time of the research. If there was more time also the local recreation entrepreneurs could be interviewed and answers could be compared with those of the platforms in order to define the transparency of the representatives. If local actors where involved, it would benefit to the accuracy of the conclusion of the research. However, these actors could have mentioned other problems since they might have another place meaning and perspective. In relation to “perception”, the results of the field observations are based on the perception of the researcher. The results are not further discussed with the interviewees. Further discussion could help to examine the perspective of the researcher and decrease bias in the research. If there was more time the analysis on the results (zoom in & link) could be further elaborated and a comparison with the mentioned aspects in Appendix 2 (Barriers to achieving successful sustainable tourism policy Dodds & Butler, 2009) could be made, which will enhance and substantiate reasoning of barriers.

The relevance of this research is an extension of knowledge of visitor management and the knowledge about understanding barriers in formulation and implementation of policies in regional governance. In general, the extended knowledge on visitor management can be used by policy makers and decision makers. The practical relevance of the research is a reflection of current practices in spatial planning in tourism and recreation in the region “Het Groene Woud”. The result of the study can be an eye opener for different actors in regional governance. This study has contributed to the need to examine visitor management policy and its implementation and the need for outlining and understanding barriers to achieving successful policy implementation. In addition to the provided knowledge a framework of how to achieve successful visitor management policy implementation for managers, policy makers and other destinations in the future development of visitor management at a regional scale could be further elaborated and is recommended to make this knowledge applicable. By outlining visitor management policies from development to evaluation, this case study provide recommendations for other destinations (“Groene Hart” or “Hoge Veluwe”) who aim to work towards visitor management at a region level.

7. Conclusion & Recommendation

7.1 Conclusion

The intent of the study is to provide insights in implementation barriers of visitor management measures. The following main question was formulated: *What aspects are important in policy formulation and implementation of visitor management and how do these aspects affect this process?* This study is performed according to a framed theoretical perspective. The theoretical framework emphasizes the role of perspectives and interaction of actors in formulation and implementation of policies. In order to provide an answer to the main research question, formulation and implementation of visitor management policies have been researched. The study is performed within a chosen case-study “Het Groene Woud”. Within this analysis the following methods were used: actor analysis, policy analysis, field observations, interviews and document-study. These analyses provided information about perspectives of actors, their cooperation, established perspectives (policies), policy related measures implemented in the region and the role of dominant perspectives in policy processes. The next part will firstly highlight the main results of the analyses. Secondly, an answer on the main research question and conclusions substantiated by the results will be given. This conclusion is grouped by the sub-research questions in order to get a logical explanation.

According the actor analysis it can be concluded that various actors in the fields “spatial planning”, “nature- and landscape conservation” and “leisure cluster” play a role in formulation and implementation of policies. The actors are: public organisations (province, municipalities, Vrijetijdshuis Brabant, regional council), land and nature managers (Natuurmonumenten, Brabants Landschap) and recreation platforms (TOP Brabant) entrepreneurs in the leisure cluster (interview, promoter region). Actors cooperate and negotiate in a designate regional council, wherein diverse actors are united and play a role in formulation and implementation of policies in the region (see figure 7 pg. 40). An example is that province and municipalities collaborate in the field of spatial planning and focus on the exchange of knowledge. These actors have different roles and goals in formulation and implementation of policies as is shown in table 1 pg. 43. The perspectives are (1) development in promotion of the region at local, regional, national or international level to increase the visitor numbers. This is an economic perspective. (2) Mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature (conserve perspective), (3) improvement of connectivity of the bigger cities Tilburg, ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Eindhoven and (4) improve cooperation between actors. According the actor analysis can be concluded that there are differences in perspectives between (shown by table 2 pg. 52). The perspectives of the leisure cluster are based on the creation of recognition in order to increase the number of visitors, while the perspectives in land and nature managers also aim to improve recognition in means of emphasizing characteristics of the region, but with the intent to preserve and conserve, which does not automatically match with an increasing amount of visitors. There can be concluded that the actors aim the same but these two perspectives (develop & preserve/conserve) do not fit automatically together. Another example is that perspectives about work domains and responsibilities are different, which can be referred to the perception of for example the extent of nature areas or dedicated names (Natuurmonumenten). One may conclude that when the extent of the region is

perceived differently it becomes hard to determine exact boundaries, because there are various actors which each individually drawn another line (interview, nature manager).

According the actor analysis it can be concluded that this abundance of platforms and organisations, influence the formulation and implementation of policies. Since there is abundance of platforms and differences in perspectives, attention to collaboration and profiling between the actors became important. In addition, actors experience the loss of overview about perspectives and interest as well as overview about responsibilities between actors. The amount of actors in the various fields of tourism and recreation as well as spatial planning, makes decision making more difficult. In addition, to that clear choice are left. Therefore it becomes important to know the different perspectives and plans of actors as well as the spatial consequences of these plans. However, overview in perspectives of actors, similarities and contradictions as well as overlap, is difficult to get, which does not contribute to decision-making and policy implementation.

According to the policy analysis it can be concluded that there is a broad agreement on strengthening the identity/image in means of brand marketing or the promotion of local products, increase visitors numbers and optimize collaboration between actors. There can be concluded that even when there are differences in perspectives and plans there is no problem in the formulation of a general vision for the region, because the cooperation and negotiation of actors has led to a general vision for the region. However, the analysed documents do not clearly reflect to spatial consequences of plans (positively or negatively) such as the exclusion of visitors in vulnerable nature, disturbance in eco-systems by noise or pollution or the reflection to nature objectives. An example is that the ambition "increasing visitors numbers" does not clearly adjust to the spatial consequences in plans of actors. The only plans in which visitors are mentioned are those of municipalities and the project "Natuurpoorten". However, these plans only reflect briefly to the spatial consequences of visitors (how things in space should be arranged). It does not describe the spatial influence(s) when, for example, visitor flows will change. Some examples which are mentioned in plans are "rethink the capacity of the tourism infrastructure" or "an explanation that ideas are established by public organisations". So, assumed is that these plans are suitable in the environment. In other words, actors can mention spatial consequences, but they do not further elaborate it, in which it becomes difficult to define if targets are reached and to control and interrupt when necessarily. According to the policy analysis it can be concluded that there is a lack of knowledge about spatial consequences of plans, which is attributable to a lack of knowledge about spatial use. An example is that the nature manager mentioned during the interview that there is insufficient knowledge about exact visitor trends in the "de Loonse & Drunense Duinen". Due to this phenomena can be stated that plans in the leisure cluster are not enough aligned with nature- and landscape conservation objectives, which can be traced to collaboration between the fields spatial planning and the leisure cluster. In addition to that it becomes more difficult to align perspectives and plans between these fields, since the perspectives "conservation" and "development" are different.

According to the field observations it can be concluded that at park level several measures are implemented to signalling and inform visitors. However, ideas and approaches of the implementation of policies and plans differ per actor, due to difference in interpretation reflective to place meaning and interest. This is demonstrated by for example by the use of names, signs, or stories about the history of the region. There can be concluded that this difference does not benefit to the image of the region (interview, policy advisor traffic & road safety). At regional level spatial measures to control visitors are implemented insufficient (interview, nature manager). According to the analyses one may conclude that there are some issues in the implementation of policies such as ideas and approaches for the realisation of plans differ among actors. Regard to the results of the policy analysis and field observations can be conclude that little attention is given to visitor management at regional level (besides the measures which are implemented to attract visitors), the measures which are implemented are applied by various actors and differ and led to confusion (interview, nature manager). These issues can be explained by several barriers in formulation and implementation of policies.

According to the analyses one may conclude that different actors operating in the same region, with their own formed perspective and plan. Table 2 pg. 52 illustrates the perspectives of actors. Perspectives are comparable with several established policies and we can notice some overlap, however there are diverse interpretation possibilities of policies. The perspective “mitigation of visitor impacts on the environment and conservation of the potentials of nature”, do not clearly come back in policies (see table 2 pg. 52). However, there is no problem in the formulation of a general vision for the region. The actual problem is the implementation of policies and coordination of perspectives. It seems that larger organizations became dominant manifested in the fact that not all perspectives are clearly transformed into policies and actions and since the economic perspective is dominant, not all actors will agree on for example a doubling amount of visitors which affect policy implementation. One may conclude that the overview between perspectives and alignment of perspectives is missing. Which results in uncertainty about what the current situation of the region is what actors actually want with the region, how to achieve targets and who has to take initiative? Therefore it will be difficult to translate the established policy into actions in practice. The above mentioned imperfections results in negative spatial consequences such as traffic problems, intense use of vulnerable nature as is explained in chapter four. With regard to the main research question one may conclude that in the region “Het Groene Woud”, the main barrier in the implementation of visitor management related policy can be explained by a lack of coordination of perspectives in the field’s spatial planning, nature- and landscape conservation and the leisure cluster. Due to the lack of coordination, several other barriers influence the process:

- Lack of knowledge about the use of space;
- Lack of knowledge about spatial consequences of plans;
- Lack of knowledge about visions and plans of actors;
- Lack of overview in cooperation and responsibilities between actors.

There can be conclude that due to the barriers it is increasingly difficult to get clear what actors want, how they want it and who is taking initiative, which influence the implementation of visitor management related measures. The above described situation explains the role of perspectives and emphasizes the importance of coordination of perspectives in formulation and implementation of policies. Regarding the current spatial problems and the ambition to double the amount of visitors, a visitor management plan for the region, in order to achieve a sustainable balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation, to ensure recreation qualities is underpinned.

7.2 Recommendations

Some recommendations in relation to the accuracy of the obtained knowledge by this study are given in chapter five. This part will give practical recommendations in relation to the results in the specific case-study situation. The above described situation emphasizes the relevance of visitor management in the region wherein cooperation and alignment of perspectives between actors is underpinned. In order to achieve a sustainable balance between nature- and landscape conservation and tourism and recreation (to ensure recreation qualities), a visitor management plan for the region could be a first engagement point. It is important to construct a dynamic plan which goes along and adjust with the development of the visitor trends over time. In order to enhance knowledge in the field of visitor management in attractive regions, knowledge could be exchange with for instance other regions. Regard to for example the “Hoge Veluwe”, research on the amount of visitors, preferences and concentration of visitors have addressed the importance to consider zoning and reflection of visitors at park and regional level (Beunen *et al.*, 2010b). The knowledge gained by this study could accompany this region to work towards visitor management at a region level. And the gained knowledge from the study in the “Hoge Veluwe” could be used in “Het Groene Woud”. This paragraph will discuss some constructive recommendations in stepwise order based on the results of the report.

In order to get more attention for visitor management in regional governance of “Het Groene Woud” and for the construction of a suitable visitor management plan for the region, it is important to give the term visitor management clarity and importance among the different actors. Also critical reflection on the elaborated components is advised. As is mentioned and recognised by actors, cooperation and collaboration between actors could be improved. Obtaining a clear overview of cooperation structures, whereby perspectives, visions and plans of actors come forward, will also contribute to the exchange of knowledge as well as alignment of visions and plans of actors. Another aspect is the collaboration platforms. The collaboration platforms are representatives of collaborated organisations. It became important that these platforms are transparent and carry the same perspective and ambition of the representing organisations. The exchange of knowledge between the platforms becomes important whereby they can play a role in aligning perspectives. Agree on the difference in perspectives and stop with the use of buzzword (abstract concepts). The main advice is to formulate policies clearly and understandable and executable. It is important that actors agree on a policy and that all actors interpret the policy correctly. It will decrease the chance of disagreement afterwards which influences implementation. Confidence in a policy is important for its effective implantation and if the policy makers do not see a policy as strong and defensible, as well as capable of implementation, it is not likely to be supported (Pigram, 1990). Besides that, it will be good to

focus and communicate about perspectives which are not reflected in policy, in order to make the issues acceptable for conservation and to work towards a balance between perspectives.

In addition, it is important to align plans of actors in the leisure cluster with those of the nature- and landscape conservation. Therefore knowledge about the spatial consequences of plans is needed, which can be performed by an environmental impact assessment (EIA) (Eggenberger & Partidario, 2000). This by for instance with models of predictions. It is important to describe measurable spatial consequences (negative and positive) of plans within a given timeframe in order to define if targets are reached, to keep overview in development and control to interrupt when necessarily. An example is to keep control on the development of an increasing amount of visitors and thereto related spatial consequences. An example: is there enough parking places, regard to the intended ambitions? Is the accessibility sufficient by a doubling amount of visitors in the region? In order to limit negative spatial consequences and to make sure that developments are directed towards the desired situation, insight in visitor behaviour is important (Donk, 2000). The behaviour of visitors can be partly influenced by the furniture of the area, announcement of facilities and its communication (Beunen *et al.*, 2010b). It is advised to get insights in visitor flows, trends and visitor capacity of the various attractive places in the region, the current tourism infrastructure and environmental problems. Vrijetijdshuis Brabant can help with this. With this knowledge can be responded to dispersion and concentration of visitors, target groups, time space behaviour etc. An example is to navigate visitors to those spots which are capable to receive visitors, also on crowded days (interviews, leisure researcher and policy advisor traffic & road safety). The leisure park the Efteling has knowledge to control and steer the visitor on park level. This knowledge might be used and can be translated at a regional level. The "Policy and Implementation Agenda leisure economy 2013-2020" could serve as a basis. Below are given some practical examples of visitor management which are advised for the region:

- **Spreading the visitor in the region:** the promotion of alternatives attractive places can be better proclaimed, in which become important to know if these alternative place are capable to receive more visitors without compromising recreation quality and ecological values, for example: respond to the announcement and guidance of the external visitor to suitable places. Indications at the main infrastructure and utilize exits;
- **Infrastructural capacity:** increase of infrastructural capacity (access routes, parking facilities);
- **Minimize the pressure on infrastructure:** promotion of alternative transport modes such as public traffic. This with the intent to minimize the peak moments;
- **Time space behaviour & target group:** respond to certain target groups that are flexible in their time distribution;
- **Adjusting events:** adjusting events, festivals and open days.

In order to enhance the knowledge of visitor management and get attention for visitor management at regional level- it is important that actors interact and collaborate- to exchange knowledge which can lead to different views and perceptions of the concept-which can serve as a basis for further development. Success of interventions depends on additional measures taken elsewhere such as, signage, parking facilities etc. (Beunen *et al.*, 2010b). This emphasize close cooperation with not only park managers and other companies which are involved at park level but also actors involved in spatial planning of tourism and recreation at regional level.

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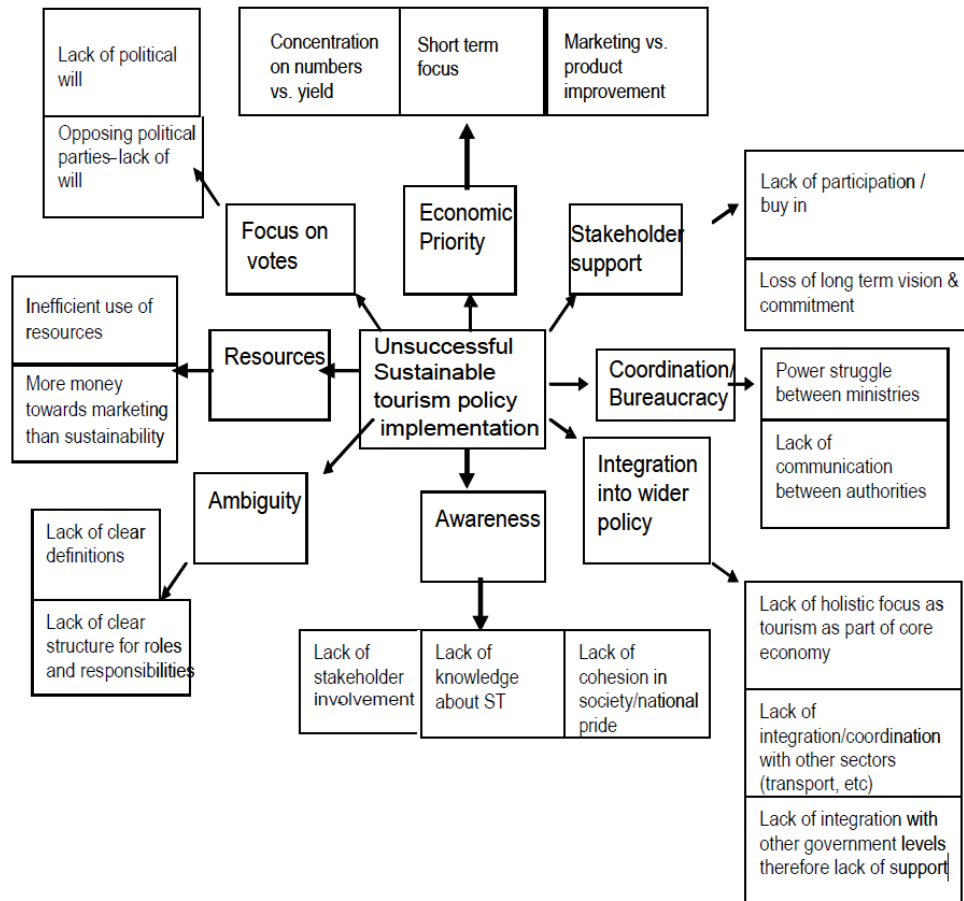
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Appendix 1 Regional council the united actors

- Province North-Brabant;
- Water boards De Dommel and Brabantse Delta;
- Municipalities Best, Boxtel, Dongen, Haaren, Heusden, Loon op Zand, Oirschot, Oisterwijk, Schijndel, Sint-Oedenrode, Sint-Michielsgestel, Son and Breugel and Vught;
- Representative cities Eindhoven, 's-Hertogenbosch and Tilburg (part of BrabantStad);
- Nature organisations and land managers: Brabants Landschap, Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, Brabantse Milieu Federatie (environment federation), Brabants Particulier Grondbezit (private landowners) and foundation "Het Groene Woud";
- Recreation: VVV North-East-Brabant, TOP Brabant, RECRON;
- Agriculture: ZLTO;
- Economy and regional business: Cooperative Het Groene Woud, Streekfestival Het Groene Woud, Streekrekening Het Groene Woud and Kamer van Koophandel (KvK), (Chamber of Commerce);
- Liveability: village councils and various organisations in the field of culture (history) and art.

Source: hetgroenewoud.com

Appendix 2 Barriers to achieving successful sustainable tourism policy



Barriers to achieving successful sustainable tourism policy (Dodds & Butler, 2009).